Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

'Beauty adorns virtue'
Dijk, S.J. van

Citation
Dijk, S. J. van. (2015, June 18). '*Beauty adorns virtue*'. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33552

Version:	Corrected Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/33552

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/33552 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Dijk, Sara Jacomien van
Title: 'Beauty adorns virtue' . Dress in portraits of women by Leonardo da Vinci
Issue Date: 2015-06-18

‘Beauty adorns virtue’
Dress in Portraits of Women by Leonardo da Vinci

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 18 juni 2015
klokke 13.45 uur
door

Sara Jacomien van Dijk

geboren te Amersfoort
in 1981

Promotiecommissie:

Prof. dr. C. Willemijn Fock (eerste promotor)
Prof. dr. Gert Jan van der Sman (tweede promotor)

Prof. dr. Philipp Zitzlsperger (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin / Hochschule Fresenius, University of Applied Sciences, Berlijn)
Prof. dr. Michael W. Kwakkelstein (Universiteit Utrecht / Nederlands Interuniversitair Kunsthistorisch Instituut, Florence)
Dr. Marika Keblusek (Universiteit Leiden)

Contents

Acknowledgements ..... **iii**
Introduction **1**
1. Leonardo's life and his interest in dress 2
2. Historiography of Italian Renaissance dress 5
3. Approaching dress in fifteenth-century portraiture 7
4. Aim and structure of the thesis 10
1. Dress in Florentine profile portraits of women c. 1440-1475 ..... **13**
1. Survey of extant portraits of women before c. 1475 14
2.1. Florentine fashion 19
2.2. Florentine fabrics 23
3.1. Dress and marriage in Florentine *ricordanze* 26
3.2. Dressing up before and beyond marriage 29
4. Workshop practice 33
5. Family honour and virtuous display 35
2. Dress in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci **39**
1. The sitter and the patron 40
2.1. Recognizing austerity 43
2.2. Ginevra's dress 48
3.1. Flemish origins 52
3.2. Sculpting fashion 54
4.1. Ginevra's portrait and the *paragone* 56
4.2. The poetics of plain dress 60
5. Dress in Florentine portraiture after *Ginevra de' Benci* 65
3. Dress in the Milanese portraits **69**
1.1. Leonardo's patron Ludovico Sforza 70
1.2. Critical reception 71
2.1. Sforza splendour 73
2.2. Dressing the duchess 75
2.3. Milanese fashion 80
3. The portrayal of splendour 86
4.1. Dress and decoration in *The Lady with an Ermine* 89
4.2. Spanish fashion 92
4.3. Conveying coiffures 94
5.1. Folds and wrinkles 97
5.2. Dating the dress in the *Belle Ferronnière* 103
6.1. Leonardo and personal adornment 104
6.2. Dress and decorum 106
4. Dressing and portraying Isabella d'Este **109**
1. The commission 110
2.1. 'The source and origin of all the pretty fashions in Italy' 112
2.2. Jewellery and honour 118
3.1. Isabella's 'living likeness' 121
3.2. The function of court portraiture 125

4. Dress in portraits 129
5. 'Leonardo the painter who is our friend' 134
5. Dress in *Mona Lisa*..... 139
1. The portrait of Lisa Gherardini 140
2.1. Mother in mourning dress 143
2.2. Fashionably virtuous Florentine wife 146
2.3. New mother in maternity dress 148
3.1. A reconstruction of the painting process of Mona Lisa's dress 151
3.2 Pictorial sources for dress in *Mona Lisa* 158
3.3. Flowing tresses 160
4.1. Timeless beauty 162
4.2. Idealized dress 167
6. Conclusion 169
1. Fashion 169
2. Art theory and workshop practice 170
3. Patrons 171
4. Further research 172
Appendix 1: Leonardo's writings on dress and drapery 173
Appendix 2: Expenses on dress in Leonardo's notebooks 181
Appendix 3: Florentine inventories and trousseaux 183
A. Inventory of the Wardrobe of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, 1456 183
B. Counter-trousseau and trousseau of Bartolomea Dietisalvi, 1459 183
C. Counter-trousseau and trousseau of Nannina de' Medici, 1466 185
D. Trousseau of Chaterina Strozzi, 1504 187
Appendix 4: Milanese trousseaux 189
A. Trousseau of Chiara Sforza, 14 March 1489 189
B. Trousseau of Cecila Gallerani, 27 July 1492 192
C. Trousseau of Bianca Maria Sforza, 28 November 1493 194
Appendix 5: Poetry 201
A. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 77 201
B. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 78 201
C. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 263 201
D. Bernardo Bellincioni - Sonnet on Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani 202
E. Il Pistoia - Belle donne a Milan 202
F. Tito Vespasiano Strozzi - Ad Cosmum pictorem 203
Appendix 6: Genealogies 205
A. Medici family 205
B. Sforza family 206
C. Este family 206
Figures 207
Glossary 261
Bibliography 265
Summary in Dutch 289
Curriculum vitae 293

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a very enjoyable adventure, not in the least because of the support of many people whom I would like to thank here. First of all, I thank my supervisors C. Willemijn Fock and Gert Jan van der Sman for their professional guidance and support. The Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) was an inspiring place to conduct research. I am grateful to Kitty Zijlmans, Frans-Willem Korsten, Korrie Korevaart, Lia ten Brink and Viola Stoop for all the help I received from the institute and for the organization of PhD seminars, where I received valuable comments on my work.

My appointment as a teacher at Leiden University in 2011 was a great encouragement to finish this thesis, for which I thank Marjan Groot. I also thank my Leiden colleagues Nelke Bartelings, Marion Boers, Elizabeth den Hartog, Marika Keblusek, Gerhard Jan Nauta, Timo de Rijk, Juliette Roding, Tineke de Ruiter, Louk Tilanus and Helen Westgeest for their continuing interest in my research. Edward Grasman's enthusiasm and support, first as a teacher and later as a colleague and a friend, gave me the confidence to start and continue writing this thesis. I also thank my students who often were the first audience for many an idea presented in this thesis. Their enthusiasm was an important source of inspiration.

Financial support of the GWO Fund (part of Stichting Vrienden van het Kunsthistorisch Instituut in Florence) and LUCAS, gratefully acknowledged here, permitted me to stay at the Dutch University Institute for Art History (NIKI) in Florence several times, where I benefited greatly from the comments by Michael Kwakkelstein. The NIKI is a wonderful place for scholarly exchange and I vividly recall the many stimulating conversations I had there with Francesca Alberti, Joanne Allen, Klazina Botke, Mireille Cornelis, Julia Dijkstra, Myrthe Huijts, Elsje van Kessel, Irene Mariani, Scott Nethersole, Tania De Nile, Marije Osnabrugge, Laura Overpelt, Willem te Slaa, Surya Stemerding, Joan Teepe, Bouk Wierda, Roselien van Wijngaarden and Joyce Zelen. Also thanks to Tjarda Vermeijden and Antonella Di Gaetano.

The opportunity to present my ideas at the Humboldt University in Berlin in Philipp Zitzlsperger's colloquium for PhD students was a great experience. I thank all participants for their invaluable questions and comments, and Maria Merseburger in particular.

It has been a particular pleasure to study many artworks in detail in various museums and discuss my research with their curators. At the Musée du Louvre, Vincent Delieuvin has been most helpful. In the National Gallery in London Caroline Campbell was very welcoming, as was Andreas Schumacher in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. In the Gemäldegalerie Berlin I received most kind assistance from Bernd Lindemann and Stephan Kemperdick. I thank Giorgio Marini at the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi for his kind cooperation in showing me all drawings that were relevant to my research. David Alan Brown kindly received me in the National Gallery of Art, Washington. I thank Luke Syson for a vivid and stimulating conversation in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Other people I would like to thank here are: Paul van den Akker, Martijn van Beek, Duncan Bull, Julia Burke, Lynn Catterson, Karolien de Clippel, Rembrandt Duits, Albert Elen, Flavio Gianassi, Irene Groeneweg, Jan de Jong, Martin Kemp, Bram de Klerck, Arjan de Koomen, Ilaria Masi, Fred Meijer, Lukas Nonner, Emily Pegues, Henry Pettifer, Christoph Pieper, Michiel Plomp, David Pollack, Giorgio Riello, Gregory Rubinstein, Ineke Sluiter, Paola Squellati-Brizio, Jeroen Stumpel, Cécile Tainturier, Henk van Veen, Adriaan Waiboer, Elizabeth

Walmsley, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr and Margreet Wolters. Further thanks go to the staff of the Leiden University Library, the Rijksmuseum Research Library, the Royal Library in the Hague, the print room of the British Museum, the Lipperheidesche Kostümbibliothek in Berlin and the Kunsthistorisches Institut, the Biblioteca Nazionale and the Archivio di Stato, all in Florence. It was a pleasure to work with Debra Molnar, who skillfully edited my English.

It would not have been possible to write this thesis without the support of friends and family. It was a delight to study in Leiden with Verena Bakhuizen, Natascha Jonker, Nathalie Goodett, Bernadette Kramer and Henriëtte Wijmenga. The wide variety of art historical subjects we discussed during our time as students were formative for me as an art historian. Barbara Borkent-Raven, friend since high school, never failed in providing moral support. Thanks also to Madeleine Pfundt and Jolein van Kregten.

It has been wonderful to see the enthusiasm for my work of both my grandmothers, oma Riemens and oma van Schaik. I thank Hans van Dijk and Yuedan Li for making their house my second home, where large parts of this thesis were written, and for many Chinese advises which have turned out wonderfully. The love and support I receive from my brother Plamen and his partner Debbie mean a lot to me – thank you both. *Grazie mille* to my parents, who have been there for me every step of the way with their unconditional love, trust, interest and encouragement.

Finally, my love and thanks to Eddy Schavemaker. I am immensely grateful for his support and his willingness to read, re-read and comment the entire manuscript. I dedicate this thesis to you, Eddy.

Introduction

It was a top news story in 2006: Mona Lisa was pregnant when she posed for Leonardo. The Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France had joined forces with the National Research Council of Canada to conduct extensive technical research on the *Mona Lisa*. New scanning techniques revealed a fine veil on top of Mona Lisa's dress that was interpreted by the researchers to be a *guarnello*, a garment worn during pregnancy, they believed. Thus Lisa was either pregnant or had just given birth. The Associated Press concluded that 'maybe they should call it the *Mama Lisa*', and this was picked up by all major international newspapers.[1] The researchers and, following their lead the media, ignored other hypotheses on Mona Lisa's dress, a disparate group of interpretations ranging from widow to a fashionable Florentine lady wearing Spanish style dress.[2] The researchers' observation that 'Mona Lisa's clothing has not been much studied', also failed to elicit any special attention.[3] Obviously, the enigma of Mona Lisa's dress had not been solved yet.

Two years after *Mona Lisa* made the headlines, I was struck by the dress in Leonardo's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci (figs. 1-2). I had set out to write a dissertation on women's dress in Italian city-states in the fifteenth century, tracing regional styles and customs. Since most scholarship concentrated on Florence, I had harboured hope that this city could be used as a reference point, extending my research from there to other cities, such as Milan, Naples and Rome. However, during a stay in Florence in spring 2008, I quickly learned that much remains to be said on Florentine Quattrocento dress, especially in portraiture. When the extant Florentine portraits of women are put in chronological order, the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci immediately stands out. Whereas her contemporaries in the 1470s boast colourful silk clothes and costly jewels, Ginevra is wearing a dull brown garment and no jewellery. By the 1480s this austere mode of portraiture seemed to have become more popular in Florence. By contrast, in these very years dowries and material wealth were growing. Ginevra's family, the Benci, were a classic example, earning an immense fortune as bankers. Why did they not show off their wealth in Ginevra's portrait?

Joanna Woods-Marsden asked similar questions regarding Leonardo's cartoon with the portrait of Isabella d'Este and his *Mona Lisa* (figs. 5-6). Again, in both portraits, the absence of jewellery begs an explanation. Would Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, really have consented to a likeness that deprives her of the adornment indispensable to her rank? Similarly, would a Florentine merchant have found it acceptable for his wife to be portrayed without the insignia of his status? Without further elaborating on the matter, Woods-Marsden speculated that 'Leonardo was able to impose this unadorned state upon his sitters'.[4]

These questions were sufficiently intriguing to warrant a shift of focus in my research: dress in Leonardo's portraits of women became the new subject. Even though Leonardo's oeuvre has been studied intensively, the fact that we know very little about his depiction of dress should come as no surprise. In 1993 when Agatha Lewin wrote a dissertation on dress in a

[1] 'Was Mona Lisa pregnant when she posed?', press release Associated Press, 27 September 2006. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/15029288 (accessed: August 2014).
[2] All theories on Mona Lisa's apparel are discussed extensively in chapter 5, p. 143-151.
[3] Mottin 2006, p. 66.
[4] Woods-Marsden 2001, p. 77-80.

selection of Dürer's paintings and drawings, she noted that, notwithstanding many decades of Dürer research, this particular subject had never been studied before.[5] Dürer is certainly not the only one. In fact, hardly any early modern painter has been studied from a dress historical perspective, Van Dyck and Rembrandt being the two major exceptions.[6]

This thesis concentrates on dress in Leonardo's portraits of women: his *Ginevra de' Benci*, the *Lady with an Ermine*, *La Belle Ferronnière*, the portrait cartoon of Isabella d'Este and *Mona Lisa* (figs. 1-6). Leonardo's only extant male portrait, known as the *Portrait of a Musician*, is not included because it is unfinished (fig. 7). Although the young man's face and hair are nearly completed, his brown robe consists of nothing more than coarse brush strokes of the underpaint. In addition, his jerkin was probably overpainted at a later date and was originally red.[7] A second portrait that I have not included is the profile of a woman on vellum, known as *La Bella Principessa*, because its recent attribution to Leonardo by Martin Kemp is not generally accepted (fig. 8).[8] Moreover, there are dress historical grounds to doubt Leonardo's authorship, a subject that will be dealt with later on.[9]

1. Leonardo's life and his interest in dress

Leonardo da Vinci was born on 15 April 1452 in Anchiano, near Vinci, the illegitimate son of the notary ser Piero and a woman named Caterina. There is a record of Leonardo living in Florence in his grandfather's house with his father in 1469.[10] Vasari informs us that ser Piero apprenticed his son to the Florentine painter and sculptor Andrea del Verrocchio, probably around 1466.[11] Verrocchio had started his career as a goldsmith, but due to a lack of income decided to turn to painting and sculpture. He also made designs for embroidery and tournament banners.[12] In 1472 Leonardo was registered as a member of the Florentine painter's guild, although he stayed in Verrocchio's workshop as a co-worker. Leonardo's first documented works date from this period. He probably received his first commissions through his father's network, for instance the *Annunciation*, painted for the monks of San Bartolomeo a Monteoliveto, who had turned to ser Piero to settle some legal affairs in 1470 (fig. 9). Other clients of Leonardo's father were the Benci family and they may have had a hand in the commission for the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, painted between c. 1475 and 1480 (figs. 1-2).[13] Through Verrocchio, Leonardo is likely to have been introduced to the Medici, who it is sometimes suggested may have ordered the *Madonna of the Carnation*, dated around 1475 and now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (fig. 10).[14]

---

[5] Lewin 1993, p. 13. In 2008 Philipp Zitzlsperger devoted more in-depth study to Dürer's self-portrait in a fur coat (Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 537). Zitzlsperger 2008.
[6] On dress in Anthony van Dyck's portraits, see: Groeneweg 1997, p. 212-216; Gordenker 2001. On dress in Rembrandt's oeuvre, see: De Winkel 2006.
[7] Keith 2011, p. 60-61; Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 95.
[8] For the attribution to Leonardo, see: Kemp and Cotte 2010.
[9] See: chapter 3, note 79.
[10] Unless otherwise stated, facts about Leonardo's life in this paragraph are drawn from Carmen Bambach's documented chronology of Leonardo's life: Bambach 2003, p. 227-241, where further references to primary sources can be found.
[11] There are no primary sources that record the year in which Leonardo entered Verrocchio's workshop. In 1466 Leonardo was thirteen or fourteen years old, the average age of a starting apprentice. See: Brown 1998, p. 7. Marani suggested the earlier date of about 1460-1464, see: DBI vol. 64 (2005), s.v. 'Leonardo da Vinci', p. 440. Ser Piero and Verrocchio knew each other at least from 1465, when Piero became the latter's notary. See: Cecchi 2003, p. 124-125.
[12] On Verrocchio's workshop, see: Brown 1998, p. 7-10.
[13] On these relations, see: Cecchi 2003, p. 127-131.
[14] On the possibility of a Medici commission, see: Syre 2006, p. 40-41, with further references.

The earliest evidence of Leonardo's interest in dress also dates from the 1470s. In 1479 Bernardo di Bandini Baroncelli was sentenced to death by the Florentine *Signoria*. He was one of the Pazzi conspirators who attempted to murder Lorenzo de' Medici in April 1478. Bernardo was the only one to escape, but was captured on 23 December 1479 in Constantinople where he had sought refuge and brought back to Florence. The Florentine patrician Lionardo di Lorenzo Morelli described in his *Cronaca* how Bernardo was put to death six days later in the Bargello: 'On the 29th, two hours before sunrise, he was hanged, wearing a Turkish gown with a blue overgown in the Turkish style, as he was caught in Turkey'.[15] The exotic attire appealed to Leonardo and he made a drawing of Bernardo's clothed body, carefully penning down the material and colour of every garment (fig. 11):[16]

a tan-coloured small cap / a doublet of black serge / a black gown lined / a blue coat lined / with fur of foxes' breasts / and the collar of the jerkin / covered with black / and red stippled velvet / Bernardo di Bandino / Baroncelli / black hose[17]

A few years later, in 1482 or 1483, Leonardo moved to Milan. His presence is first recorded on 25 April 1483 in the contract for the altarpiece known as *The Virgin of the Rocks*, executed in two versions, currently in the Louvre in Paris and the National Gallery in London (figs. 12-13). During this first Milanese period, Leonardo's versatility reached its full growth. Besides painting and sculpture, he was also working on scientific projects, examining and drawing the human body, occupied himself with architecture and hydraulics, designed stage decorations for ducal festivities, and started collecting notes for what was to become a treatise on painting. From about 1490 onwards, he received ducal commissions for paintings and portraits in particular, notably *The Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière* (figs. 3-4). Having become a valued court painter, Leonardo's workshop expanded and he hired assistants, including Gian Giacomo Caprotti, known as Salaì, who would stay with him until Leonardo's death in 1519.

Another important court commission was a fresco in the refectory of the Santa Maria delle Grazie, representing the Last Supper, painted between 1492 and 1498. The Ferrarese poet and writer Giambattista Giraldi, nicknamed 'Il Cinthio', described in 1554 how Leonardo had gone about depicting all the different characters of Christ and the twelve apostles:

Whenever he would paint some figure, he considered first its quality and its nature, that is, whether the person should be noble or plebeian, joyous or grave, troubled or gay, old or young, of irate or tranquil mind, good or evil; and then, knowing its being, he went where he knew persons of such quality congregated and observed diligently their faces, manners, clothes and bodily movements. Having found that which seemed to him befitting to what he envisaged to create, he drew it with his stylus in the little book that he always kept at his belt.[18]

---

[15] 'a dì 29 detto fu impiccato due ore avanti giorno con una turcazzana indosso - con una veste alla turchese indosso azzura, come ne venne preso in Turchia', cited from: Bayonne 2004, p. 17.
[16] The subject of the drawing was first identified as Bernardo Baronceli by: Richter no. 664. See further Françoise Viatte in: Bayonne 2004, p. 15-17, cat. 2.
[17] 'Berrettino tanè / farsetto di raso nero / cioppa nera foderata / di gole di volpe / e 'l collare della giubba / soppannato di velluto appicchiet[-] / tato nero e rosso / Bernardo di Bandini / Baroncigli / calze nere'. Transcription and translation: Richter no. 664.
[18] 'Questi, qualhora uoleua dipingere qualche figura, consideraua prima la sua qualità, e la sua natura: cioè se dueua ella essere nobile, o plebea, giojosa, o seuera, turbata, o lieta, uecchia, o giouane, irata, o di animo tranquillo, buona, o maluagia: et poi, conosciuto l'esser suo, se n'andaua oue egli sapeua, che si ragunassero persone di tal qualità; et osseruaua diligentemente i lor uisi, le lor maniere, gli habiti, et i

Cinthio's remark that Leonardo paid attention to the coherence of a figure's character and his clothes, recording this in a booklet, calls to mind his drawing of the hanged Bernardo Baroncelli with the meticulous notes on his garments (fig. 11). Apparently, this was part of Leonardo's working method.

In 1499, after the French invasion of Milan, Leonardo left the city. Several years of travelling followed. Via Mantua, where he drew a portrait of the Marchioness Isabella d'Este in the winter of 1499-1500, he reached Venice in the spring of 1500 (fig. 5). In April he was back in Florence, but after two years he left the city, accepting an offer to become Cesare Borgia's 'architect and general engineer' in August 1502. In February or March the following year Leonardo settled in Florence again. Around this time, he accepted a commission to paint the portrait of the wife of the Florentine silk merchant Francesco del Giocondo, the *Mona Lisa* (fig. 6). At the same time he was working on cartoons for the altarpiece *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, currently in the Louvre (fig. 14). Leonardo continued to rework both paintings over a long period of time. A commission on a far bigger scale was a fresco of the battle of Anghiari in Palazzo Vecchio for the Florentine *Signoria* which did not survive. Vasari praised the cartoon extensively, in particular the attention Leonardo had paid to the depiction of dress, stating: 'It is not possible to describe the invention that Leonardo showed in the garments of the soldiers, all varied by him in different ways, and likewise in the helmet-crests and other ornaments'.[19]

In 1506 and 1507 Leonardo lived alternately in Florence and Milan. Both the Florentine *Signoria* and the French rulers in Milan requested his services. Eventually, Leonardo settled in Milan in 1508 and was paid a regular fee by the French king. Besides working on *Mona Lisa* and *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, he finished the second version of *The Virgin of the Rocks* (fig. 13). During this second Milanese sojourn, he made many studies of landscapes, hydraulics and geological subjects. A new member of Leonardo's workshop in these years was the nobleman Francesco Melzi (1491/93-c. 1570). Starting as a pupil, he would become an important companion and the heir of Leonardo's written legacy. When the French were defeated by the Swiss army in 1511, Leonardo and his associates retreated to Melzi's estate in Vaprio d'Adda, a small town between Milan and Bergamo.

In 1513 Leonardo found a new patron, Giuliano de' Medici, and he joined the latter's household in Rome by December that year. Between 1513 and 1516 Leonardo devoted much time to the study of classical ruins, engineering work for his patron, and his planned treatise on painting. In 1516 he accepted an invitation from the king of France, Francis I (r. 1515-1547), to become court painter. Together with Salaì and Melzi he left Italy for France. He lived at Chastelet du Cloux, near the court in Amboise. Leonardo probably suffered a stroke in 1517, which paralysed his right side. Since this prevented him from painting, he spent his last two years designing scenery for court festivals and architecture. He also undertook a final attempt to organise his notes on painting, but was unable to finish the treatise before his death on 2 May 1519. In his will he bequeathed his paintings to Salaì and all his notes, drawings and painter's tools to Melzi. He also made a final reference to dress, for his maid Maturina was to receive his

---

mouimenti del corpo: et truata cosa, che gli paresse atta a quel, che far uoleua, la riponeua collo stile al suo libbricino, che sempre egli teneua a cintola.' Giovamabattista Giraldi Cinthio, *Discorsi... intorno al comporre de i Romanzi, delle Comedie, e delle Tragedie*, Venice 1554. Cited from: Kwakkelstein 1994, p. 86-87 (translation), app. A, p. 139 (original text).

[19] 'Né si può esprimere il disegno che Lionardo fece negli abiti de' soldato, variatamente variata da lui', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 33. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 637.

'gown of good black cloth lined with fur' and 'an overgown of woollen cloth' in addition to two ducats for her good service.[20]

As the heir of Leonardo's written legacy, Francesco Melzi decided to finish the huge task of assembling a treatise on painting. He compiled a manuscript entitled *Trattato della pittura* from eighteen notebooks, all listed at the end of the text. Today, the treatise – known as the Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270, usually abbreviated as CU – is in the Vatican Library. Many of Leonardo's notebooks used by Melzi are now lost. Many of the sheets containing sketches were cut up to obtain the drawings and the pieces of paper bearing notes were discarded. Less than half the text of the Codex Urbinas can be traced back to Leonardo's extant manuscripts. Thus, Melzi's compilation is the only form in which many of Leonardo's writings have come down to us.[21]

Melzi carefully copied Leonardo's text, but he rearranged fragments following his own judgment. In chapter four of the *Trattato della pittura*, entitled 'De panni et modo di vestir le figurre con grazia et de eli abiti, et nature de panni', Melzi collected notes on dress and drapery. Leonardo had already shown the intention to do so. When he compiled a list of subjects around 1510, he included 'a discourse on cloths and vestments' (see app. 1, no. 14).[22] In Appendix 1, all of Leonardo's extant notes on dress and drapery, both from original notebooks and the *Trattato della pittura*, have been assembled in chronological order, following the dates suggested by Carlo Pedretti.

2. Historiography of Italian Renaissance dress

The interest in Italian dress from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries dates back to the second half the nineteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt was one of the first to pay attention to the subject in his *Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, published in 1860, commending the becoming costumes depicted in artworks of the period. At the same time he pointed out that we cannot be sure whether painters depicted dress faithfully, an important methodological notion, since fifteenth-century Italian garments have not survived. Burckhardt's view on Quattrocento dress is determined by the concept of the rise of the individual in the Renaissance. Along this line he emphasizes the diversity of both individual and regional styles, praising their beauty and richness, and regards foreign influences at the end of the fifteenth century as a decline.[23] Burckhardt also claimed that a woman's status was equal to that of a man in Renaissance Italy, thus inspiring growing attention for the great women of the era.[24] As a result, the nineteenth century saw a boom of newly discovered archival sources relating to women's lives and dress, often transcribed and published by Italian archivists.[25]

Monographic studies on dress did not appear until the start of the twentieth century. Hanns Floerke published his *Moden der Italienischen Renaissance* in 1917. Strongly influenced by

---

[20] 'una veste de bon pano negro foderato de pelle: una socha de panno', last will of Leonardo da Vinci, Royal Court in Amboise, 23 April 1519. Published in: Beltrami 1919, p. 152-154, no. 244. Since dress and textiles were quite expensive, they were often included in last wills.

[21] For a general introduction to the *Trattato della pittura*, see Heydenreich's introduction in: McMahon 1956, p. xi-xliii.

[22] Pedretti 1977, vol. 1, p. 287-288. See also Pedretti 1964, p. 144-145, where he still dates the sheet slightly earlier to after 1505.

[23] Burckhardt 1860, p. 365-366.

[24] Burckhardt 1860, p. 391-395.

[25] Some examples are the publication of the trousseaux of Bianca Maria Sforza (Ceruti 1875), Elisabetta Gonzaga (Gandini 1893), Lucrezia Borgia (Beltrami 1903), the letters of Alessandra Macinghi (Macinghi Strozzi 1877), and the many publications by Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier of archival documents relating to Isabella d'Este.

Heinrich Wölfflin's formalistic approach, Floerke attempted to apply the art historical concepts of Gothic and Renaissance style to dress.[26] He combined this stylistic approach with a focus on anecdotes about dress derived from literary sources such as Dante, Sacchetti's *Trecentonovelle* and Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*, in order to – as he puts it – add the voice of the documents to the language of the pictures.[27] However, a true confrontation of written and visual sources, connecting depicted garments with their contemporary names, had not yet been realized. This was done seven years later in a study by Egidia Polidori Calamandrei that remains important today.

Polidori Calamandrei laid the basis for modern-day research on Florentine dress with her book *Le vesti delle donne fiorentine nel Quattrocento*, published in 1924. Using a wide variety of sources, such as household inventories, bridal trousseaux and sumptuary laws, she recovered the most important terminology used for dress in fifteenth-century Florence. Although it is not always easy to distinguish the differences between the various garments, she was nonetheless able to identify the major items of a lady's wardrobe and recognize them in paintings. She based her definitions on the characteristics of each garment as described in the numerous inventories and letters she consulted, as well as descriptions of garments in sumptuary laws.[28] Polidori Calamandrei was careful not to regard artworks as a fully reliable visual source. She pointed out that, however faithful to reality fifteenth-century art usually was, artists could change lines and colours according to their aesthetic principles or add more luxurious and beautiful dress than the sitter owned.[29] Polidori Calamandrei's research, founded on a multitude of written and visual sources that complement and correct each other, makes her book invaluable for any student of Quattrocento dress.[30]

Contrary to Polidori Calamandrei, Elizabeth Birbari believed dress in fifteenth-century Italian painting to be exceptionally realistic. In her book *Dress in Italian Painting 1460-1500*, published in 1975, she stated that the renewed interest in depicting nature in this era led to a true to life depiction of dress and tried to show that artists possessed a knowledge of garment construction that enabled them to do so. According to her, it is solid proof of a painting's veracity if a garment can be recreated from it, even if the subject is Biblical or mythological.[31] This theory has found wide acceptance, possibly partly due to the fact that it was the first book on Quattrocento dress available in English. Even though previous scholars, starting with Burckhardt, stressed the need to be cautious when using painting as a visual source, Birbari's work has remained highly influential and many art historians still regard the depiction of dress in fifteenth-century painting as utterly realistic and reliable.[32]

A new line of research was explored by Stella Mary Newton in 1988. She made an in-depth study of Venetian dress in the years 1495-1525. Focusing on social hierarchy, she carefully unfolded its written and unwritten rules. Regarding dress as a means of communication or

---

[26] See especially: Floerke 1917, p. 5, 42-43, 54.
[27] Floerke 1917, p. 82.
[28] Because sumptuary laws were often violated or served as a means to impose an extra tax on wealth, they are usually not regarded as a reliable source for what was actually being worn or not being worn. However, they do provide us with descriptions that help identify different types of dress. On the ineffectiveness of sumptuary laws, see: Bridgeman 2000, p. 215-221.
[29] Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 10-11.
[30] Rosita Levi Pisetzky used a similar approach, comparing visual and textual sources, for her volume on Quattrocento dress in the comprehensive series *La storia del costume in Italia*. Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2. Another survey on dress in fifteenth-century Italy that draws on the work of Polidori Calamandrei and Levi Pisetzky, is: Herald 1981.
[31] Birbari 1975, p. 3-5.
[32] Scholars who referred directly to Birbari are for instance: Dempsey 1992, p. 65-67; Brown 1998, p. 12.

'language', she was able to show how the Venetians maintained a strict dress code, controlled by law, while at the same time allowing a certain degree of individual expression.[33] Newton was extremely cautious when examining artworks as visual source, even more so than previous scholars, for she not only had to make sure actual dress was depicted, it had to be Venetian as well. She therefore preferred those works that are known to have been commissioned for a specific church or institution in Venice.[34] A very similar approach was applied by Jane Bridgeman, who studied Florentine men's dress between 1400 and 1470 in her dissertation, which unfortunately remained unpublished.[35]

In the past two decades, a group of Anglo-Saxon scholars have shifted their attention to economic aspects, in particular the consumption of luxury goods. Carole Collier Frick's *Dressing Renaissance Florence. Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, published in 2002, is a fine example. Inspired by the work of economic historian Richard Goldthwaite on the Florentine demand for art and of social historian Anthony Molho on the aristocratization of the Florentine elite, she asked similar questions with regard to dress. She explored subjects such as the high cost of dress, spending patterns, cost and status, and the relationship between consumer and artisan.[36]

The new approaches taken since the 1980s have significantly broadened dress historical research and are welcome additions to the field. However, the basal question of how to deal with artworks as a visual source, already touched upon by Polidori Calamandrei and other early scholars, still divides opinion. Frick more recently pointed out the fundamental challenges again: the difficulty of matching names and garments, while a correct depiction of clothes is not necessarily a primary concern for the artist and the impossibility of rendering, let alone recognizing, the subtle differences in colour hues of textile in paint.[37] What is more, we are practically ignorant of the workshop practice of portrait painting. It is not known whether a painter received the garments that were to be portrayed, as often happened from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, or how common the use of workshop props was.[38] These questions are rarely raised by dress historians working on the fifteenth century. It is here that the history of dress meets art historical methodology.

3. Approaching dress in fifteenth-century portraiture

Art historians have traditionally used the history of dress only as a means of dating artworks. Rapidly changing dress styles can indeed provide a *terminus post quem*. An example relevant to the subject of this thesis is Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine*, a portrait that for a long time was thought to have been executed c. 1483-1485, until in 1921 the art historian Attilio Schiaparelli recognized the sitter's dress as Milanese fashion from the 1490s. He therefore justly pushed the dating of the portrait forward to c. 1490.[39]

Yet, dress history occasionally finds a wider use in the field of art history. Some art historians, especially those engaged in gender studies, have used dress and jewellery in portraiture as a means to distinguish the sitter's standing, marital status or social position. For

---

[33] Newton 1988, p. 5-8.
[34] Newton 1988, p. 7.
[35] Bridgeman 1986.
[36] Frick 2002. Studies on Italian dress from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century in a similar vein are: Welch 2000, p. 101-119; Mosher Stuard 2006; Welch 2008, p. 241-268. See also: Rublack 2010, on the German area in the early modern period.
[37] Frick 2002, p. 149.
[38] On painters receiving garments of their sitters to be included in a portrait, see: Jones and Stallybrass 2000, p. 34.
[39] Schiaparelli 1921, p. 135-142. This subject is addressed in chapter 3, p. 94-97.

instance, Patricia Simons, and in her footsteps Adrian Randolph, has stressed the importance of representative dress and jewellery during betrothal and marriage ceremonies. Both stated that the presence of lavish jewellery, expensive garments and bound hair in fifteenth-century profile portraits of women signalled the sitter's married status.[40] Jennifer Craven objected to this line of scholarship, which tends to single-mindedly imagine sumptuously dressed up women as 'victims' of a male dominated society that imposes certain types of decorations on the female body. By contrast, she revisits Burckhardt and argues that dress should be recognized as an instrument of women's individual self-expression.[41]

Simons and Craven each singled out one of two distinctly different functions of fashion that were formulated by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. The latter has shown that dress can either serve to express adherence to a certain group, the male dominated family lineage in the case of Simons, or as an expression of individualism, as stressed by Craven.[42] Can dress in portraiture always be seen in this way, that is, as an immediate reflection of reality? In his study on Renaissance portraits, Lorne Campbell cautioned that ascertaining the status of an anonymous sitter through dress and jewellery can be hazardous. Sitters could have rented garments or the painter may have resorted to workshop props. Moreover, there are sitters who are known to have been wealthy, but were nonetheless portrayed in modest dress.[43] Most art historians have supposed a one-to-one relationship between the portrayed garments and those owned and worn by the sitter. However, unless there is an inventory listing dress and jewellery of the sitter that appears in the portrait, we cannot simply assume that the painter depicted the sitter's actual dress.

This issue reaches beyond the dress historical question of whether artworks can be reliable visual sources, although it does intersect with it. Most dress historians, whether they are working from a stylistic, social or economic perspective, do not also scrutinize the sartorial choices in portraiture.[44] However, as any other work of art, a portrait is in principle a construction in which the sitter is intentionally represented in certain dress. Obviously, this attire does not by nature carry the same meaning as in real social intercourse. For instance, as is argued in chapter 2, to appear in public in a relatively cheap and unadorned garment as depicted in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci would have been intolerable for a lady of her standing (fig. 1). Yet in her portrait it was apparently acceptable. From an art historical point of view, it is not only relevant to know whether this garment existed or at least could have existed. It is equally important to decipher the message it was meant to convey to the beholder.

The only art historian to date who has written extensively on the relationship between the meaning of dress in the social context and the portrayal of dress in art is Philipp Zitzlsperger. Studying Dürer's self-portrait in a fur coat, currently in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, he has pleaded for the use of a 'dress historical methodology' within art history.[45] His proposed methodology takes its lead from Panofsky's well-known model disentangling iconography and iconology and could be described as a 'vestimentary iconology', although not in the allegorical, humanist sense. Zitzlsperger distinguishes dress as insignia and as symbol. An example of the first category is the tiara, immediately identifying the wearer as pope, in

[40] Simons 1988, p. 9; Randolph 1998, p. 182-200. See also chapter 1, p. 26-29. Compare also: Tinagli 1997, p. 49-53.
[41] Craven 1997, p. 200-204.
[42] Bourdieu 1979.
[43] Campbell 1990, p. 139.
[44] An exception is Frick's useful last chapter, 'Visualizing the Republic in Art. An Essay on Painted Clothes': Frick 2002, p. 201-219.
[45] Zitzlsperger 2008. See also: Zitzlsperger 2006, p. 36-51.

ecclesiastical ceremony as much as in art. In short, it means that the fabric, cut and colour of garments are not meaningless. Established by social codes, they denote a person's identity as for instance a nobleman, patrician or merchant. A sermon by the preacher Bernardino of Siena may serve as a fifteenth-century Italian illustration here. In 1427 he fulminated against people wearing dress that did not conform to their identity, condemning for instance merchants who wore short tunics that were only appropriate for soldiers or married women dressing like prostitutes. He then explained:

> Well, how do you recognize shops? By their insignia [insigne]. […] How do you recognise if a woman is good? By her comportment. So you recognize the draper's shop by its sign [segno]. So you recognize the shop of the merchant by its sign. And how do you recognize friars? By their sign too. How do you recognize the monk when he is wearing black, grey or white? By his sign. That what is on the outside shows what is on the inside.[46]

The symbolic and more polyvalent function of dress is best explained through Panofsky's example of the hat, also cited by Zitzlsperger. Panofsky describes meeting an acquaintance on the street who greets him by doffing his hat. From a formal point of view, the beholder distinguishes only line and colour. The recognition of the gentleman raising his hat is a first step of interpretation that Panofsky has designated as iconography. To understand the intention or symbolic value, a salute, the beholder must have a deeper knowledge of customs and culture.[47] According to Zitzlsperger, an understanding of the symbolic meaning of dress is required in order to uncover its meaning in art. He justly states that dress in art is firmly rooted in the sartorial reality of the beholder, without being a mirror image of it. The art historian's task then is not only to recognize the signal and symbolic functions of dress, but also to reconstruct possible shifts of meaning that occur when the insignia is moved from the social context into art.[48]

The observation that art does not necessarily mimic a vestimentary reality, even when depicting real dress, is worthy of elaboration. To come to a better understanding of the relationship between dress in the social context and dress in painting, I am indebted to Michael Baxandall's concept of 'the period eye'. Baxandall published his classic *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* in 1972. In this study, he showed the importance of various social factors to pictorial style. One of the topics he explored is the 'visual skills' of the patronizing class that originate from their daily lives. He convincingly argued that the beholder brings to the picture his own assumptions, which are modelled by experience and cultural background. For instance, Baxandall is interested in the meaning of the gestures of the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary in several Annunciation scenes that are not immediately recognizable to the modern-day beholder. By analysing descriptions of Mary's state of mind during the Annunciation in fifteenth-century sermons and a study of the contemporary ideas on the physical expression of a mental state in the writings of Alberti and Leonardo, amongst others, he is able to connect the movements in painting to sources such as treatises on dance and conduct literature for young girls. Baxandall is obviously not arguing that painters depicted the Virgin as if she were dancing,

---

[46] 'A che si cognoscon le buttighe, eh? Alle insegne. [...] A che si cognosce una donna quand'ella è buona? alla portatura sua. Così si cognosce la bottiga di quello lanaiolo al suo segno. Così il mercatante si cognosce la sua bottiga al segno. E frati a che si cognoscono? pure al lor segno. El monaco a che il cognosci quandi'elli è o nero o bigio o bianco? al segno loro. Quello di fuore dimostra quello che è dentro.' Bernardino da Siena 1853, p. 247-248. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.
[47] Panofsky 1939, p. 3-5; Zitzlsperger 2008, p. 153-154.
[48] Zitzlsperger 2008, p. 146-153.

but he shows how they made use of a commonly known visual language, which included familiar dance movements, to express an emotion or a virtue.[49] In short, Baxandall's point is that the painter depends on the cultural assumptions, or as he designates it, the 'period eye', of his patron or beholder.

Baxandall's methodology is very helpful when studying dress in painting. Using the idea of the 'period eye', my approach is twofold. On the one hand I studied the use of garments in social interaction. When were garments worn and by whom? What was considered appropriate or inappropriate? Whereas Zitzlsperger especially recommended sumptuary laws as a source for reconstructing the insignia function of dress, I turned to a much wider range of sources, such as conduct literature, ego-documents and poetry. Furthermore, inventories of trousseaux provide an image of the garments that were actually worn. Sumptuary legislation was often ineffective or simply did not apply to the higher social classes who had their portraits painted. On the other hand, I focused in on the painter. How did he make use of dress to convey his message? Is this similar to the sitter's use of dress in reality, and, if not, why?

From the painter's point of view, four major factors influenced his work. First of all, there are the patron's wishes and expectations. Although little is known about the choice of dress in portraits, we may fairly assume that in most cases the patron requested costly, representative attire. Secondly, the depiction may have been influenced by a pictorial tradition, either because the artist followed it or because he broke away from it. The aforementioned portrait of Ginevra de' Benci is a break with the tradition of sumptuously dressed female sitters. Another important factor is workshop practice. Did the painter draw from life or did he use workshop props, design drawings or other resources? Finally, artistic theory is a focal point in this thesis. The representation of beauty, a woman's in particular, is a subject of considerable importance in artists' writings and Leonardo is no exception. He had specific ideas on ornament and female beauty, which he put into practice in his portraits.

4. Aim and structure of the thesis

The first chapter provides an analysis of dress in Florentine female portraiture of the years 1440-1475, the period preceding Leonardo's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci. It includes a survey of extant profile portraits of Florentine women and an introduction to the fashions and luxury fabrics depicted, as well as an assessment of the function and meaning of costly attire in Florentine female portraiture. This is the background for the second chapter, which deals with Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*, exploring the social connotations of Ginevra's humble dress as well as the literary sources and the art-theoretical principles that provide a context for its representation in portraiture (figs. 1-2). The primary question to be answered here is why Leonardo represented Ginevra in plain dress.

Because the available sources for each of the portraits covered in my research are entirely different in nature, I was able to explore Leonardo's depiction of dress from a different angle in each of the respective chapters. Thus, the sources pertaining to the Milanese portraits consist of numerous letters from and to people at the Milanese court and several late fifteenth-century bridal trousseaux, which provide extraordinary insight into the splendour of Milanese court dress. The aim of the third chapter is to make a careful comparison of Milanese fashion and court portraiture on the one hand and Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière* on the other hand. This shows the artist's persistent preference for austerity and his

[49] In a similar vein, Baxandall relates mathematical developments relevant to the fifteenth-century merchant to his religious experience and pictorial style, in particular linear perspective. Baxandall 1972, p. 29-108.

adjustments to existing dress as a consequence of that (figs. 3-4). To grasp Leonardo more fully, his personal dress preferences in real life is analysed against the backdrop of his depiction of dress in art. Are the two related or not?

The fourth chapter is dedicated to Leonardo's relationship with one of his patrons, Isabella d'Este. A substantial volume of correspondence between Isabella and her agents, as well as family members, merchants and artists has survived. This rich material illustrates in great detail the importance of possessing the latest fashion, the costliest jewels and the best art. Isabella's letters also reveal the characteristic way she dealt with artists and artisans. This illuminates the background against which we should view the pressing question of why she accepted being depicted without the finery indispensable to her rank (fig. 5).

In the last chapter I reassess the prevalent hypotheses on Mona Lisa's attire (fig. 6). The recently discovered workshop copy and the scientific analysis of both the *Mona Lisa* and the copy facilitate the reconstruction of the painting process of the dress, from underdrawing to finished painting, and provide further insight into Leonardo's workshop practice. After tracing the pictorial sources of Mona Lisa's dress and hairstyle, I conclude the chapter by relating Leonardo's writing on dress and drapery to *Mona Lisa* to assess the meaning of her dress.

Why Leonardo represented women in plain dress is the question that is at the heart of this research. Might this preference for austerity have been related to his art theory? How did he go about painting dress? How did he respond to his patrons' wishes? As these questions are addressed by studying the portraits chronologically, a picture will emerge of Leonardo's approach to dress in portraiture and how that approach developed over time.

1. Dress in Florentine profile portraits of women c. 1440-1475

This chapter deals with dress in Florentine female portraiture in the decades before Leonardo's first recorded portrait, the *Ginevra de' Benci*, painted c. 1475-1480 (figs. 1-2). The earliest extant autonomous portraits of women commissioned in Florence date from around 1440. Two important features that characterize the Florentine portraits painted between c. 1440 and 1475 are a profile view and elaborate costume. An analysis of the sitters' dress in particular will provide the reader with the necessary understanding of the appearance and development of Florentine fashion in these decades and the leading conventions in Florentine portraiture of women at the time of Leonardo's earliest activity as a painter in the mid-1470s.

Although Florentine Quattrocento female portraiture has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past two decades, especially in the form of exhibitions, it is important to realize that our knowledge of the subject is necessarily limited.[1] First of all, the absolute number of surviving portraits is fairly small.[2] It is impossible to establish the numbers of portraits that were ever painted during the fifteenth century due to a lack of written evidence. Thus, we cannot be sure whether the extant portraits are representative of the total production.[3] Secondly, the authorship of most of these rare extant portraits is less than certain, with attributions that frequently change and are often based on shaky ground, such as comparisons with other portraits that have not been securely ascribed themselves.

The identification of the largely anonymous sitters proves even more difficult as there are usually no clues that would enable research. In several ground-breaking studies, Elizabeth Cropper has convincingly shown that portraits of women in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy are no mere physical likenesses, but rather representations of an ideal woman, influenced by Petrarchan love poetry and the neo-platonic paradigm that outer beauty is a sign of inner virtue.[4] All the portraits therefore convey a similar notion of female beauty, characterized by features such as blond tresses, elongated necks, rose-red lips and perfect white skin. This makes identification based on physical resemblance extremely difficult. Furthermore, archival references regarding Florentine portraiture, both male and female, are scarce. Of the vast majority of the extant portraits, neither the sitter nor the patron are known, let alone the occasion for the commission.

All portraits up to the early 1470s show lavishly dressed women in profile view. Since nothing is known about the sitters or their patrons, the sitter's dress often provides the only clue for the art historian. The aim of this chapter is to assess these portraits against the written sources on dress and jewellery, in order to establish which classes of Florentine society had their

---

[1] Three major portrait exhibitions were: Washington 2001; London 2008; Berlin / New York 2011.
[2] The exact number of extant portraits is difficult to establish. The first overview of fifteenth-century Florentine profile portraits (both male and female) was made by Lipman 1936, p. 101-102. Since 1936, several of the portraits included by Lipman have turned out to be forgeries and many attributions have changed. For a more recent overview of Quattrocento female portraits, based on Lipman, with references to literature, see: Craven 1997, p. 211-311. Craven counted thirty-six extant portraits and also included a list of ten lost works, see: Craven 1997, p. 322-332.
[3] Pope-Hennessy roughly estimated that we may be left with only five to ten percent of the original production, warning that it is risky to draw conclusions on statistical grounds. Pope-Hennessy 1966, p. 59.
[4] Cropper 1976, p. 374-394; Cropper 1986, p. 175-190.

portraits painted. The chapter starts with a survey of extant Florentine portraits of women from the 1440s up to the mid-1470s, and continues with a description of the Florentine women's fashion of these decades identifying the various garments and jewels depicted. Next, the sitters' dress is compared with written sources, mainly trousseaux and counter-trousseaux, reviewing the prevailing hypothesis that this attire indicates a betrothal or a wedding. After examples are given to illustrate the importance of the painter's workshop practice, an analysis is made of how the depicted dress contributes to the function of portraiture in the context of the *familia*.

1. Survey of extant portraits of women before c. 1475

Fifteenth-century archival references regarding portraiture are rare and usually not very informative. In his study on art in the Renaissance *palazzo*, Lydecker noted that if portraits are listed in household inventories, they are usually described rather generically as 'head of a woman' or 'head of a man'.[5] Identifications of the sitter are seldom given and only one example is known in which the artist's name is mentioned, namely 'a painting with a rounded top with two shutters depicting the bust of a woman by Domenico Veneziano' in the Medici inventory of 1492.[6] Ironically, none of Veneziano's portraits seems to have survived. Only thirteen Florentine portraits of women dating before or around 1475, all in profile view, have come down to us.[7] They are all discussed here in chronological order, as established in recent scholarship. As this survey shows, dating and attributions are often based on connoisseurship solely.

The earliest profile, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is securely attributed to Fra Filippo Lippi and shows a woman in an interior facing left towards a man at the window (fig. 15). Through a second window behind the sitter, a view on a landscape is offered. It is the only portrait that offers a clue enabling a hypothetical identification of the sitters. The coat of arms on the windowsill is probably that of the Scolari family. As a result the sitters are usually identified as Lorenzo di Ranieri Scolari and Angiola di Bernardo Sapiti.[8] The portrait may have been painted to commemorate their marriage, which must have been celebrated between 1436 and 1444, or, as Pope-Hennessy suggested, to celebrate the birth of their first child in 1444.[9] Given the inscription on the sleeve of the lady, which reads 'lealtà' (loyalty), a marriage portrait seems most likely. On the basis of these dates and on stylistic grounds, the portrait is usually

[5] Lydecker only found ten portraits (five paintings, three terra cotta busts and two portraits of unidentified form) with an identified sitter in inventories, all dating to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Four of these were women, including the extant portraits of Lucrezia Tornabuoni and Giovanna degli Albizzi (figs. 42, 61). Lydecker 1987, p. 66-67.

[6] 'Uno colmetto con dua sportelli, dipintovi dentro d'una dama, di mano di maestro Domenico da Vinegia', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 72, fol. 38v.

[7] I have omitted the *Profile Portrait of a Lady* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (inv. no. 1541-4), that was catalogued by the museum as Florentine and included by Craven in her overview of Florentine female portraits, see: Hoff 1995, p. 167; Craven 1997, p. 241-242, cat. 10. Its dating is problematical and the style unusual for Florence. Moreover, it is not certain whether or not the sitter is a Florentine woman, especially since her dress and hairstyle show strong similarities to the portrait medal of Isotta of Rimini. See: Hudson 2008, p. 327-328. A Ferrarese origin of the panel has been suggested by: Toledano 1987, p. 153, no. A11.

[8] The identification was first proposed by: Breck 1914, p. 49.

[9] There is some discussion on the date of the marriage. Most scholars state the couple was married in 1436, but there is evidence they were still unmarried by 1439, see: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 96. Regarding the suggestion that the portrait was painted to commemorate a birth, see: Pope-Hennessy and Christiansen 1980, p. 57.

dated between 1440 and 1444.[10] Recently, Katalin Prajda proposed a different identification, suggesting the coat of arms does not refer to the groom's family, but to the bride's, since it is part of the interior space she inhabits. The only Scolari girl of marriageable age in the 1430s and 1440s was Francesca di Matteo Scolari (c. 1424-after 1481), who married Bonaccorso Pitti in 1444. Prajda convincingly argues it is unlikely that Lorenzo Scolari could have afforded the rich attire of Lippi's sitter. Angiola's dowry consisted of a meagre 340 florins, whereas Francesca Scolari received no less than 4,500 florins. Moreover, Francesca's father-in-law, Luca di Bonaccorso Pitti, was an important patron of the arts.[11] Since portraits were still a novelty in the 1440s, it seems reasonable to connect Lippi's double portrait with the wealthy and art-loving Pitti family.

Another portrait by Lippi is now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (fig. 16). It shows a young woman facing left, in an interior setting with a view of the blue sky through a window. The sitter's right hand is raised to her chest, touching her veil, and she holds her right sleeve between the fingertips of her left hand, subtly pointing out the different textures of the materials. The reverse of the panel is painted as well, showing a marble imitation. The date of this portrait has long been a subject of debate, with suggestions ranging from c. 1430 to c. 1460-1470, but on the basis of comparison with the Metropolitan portrait, it is now dated to the mid-1440s.[12] The overall look of the sitter's costume is now rather plain, but originally it was highly ornamented. The cuff, headdress, girdle, and rings all show shallow holes into which precious materials, most likely gold, would have been inserted. This rare form of decoration must have given the panel an extraordinary precious look.[13]

The most enigmatic portrait from this period is a profile of a woman now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (fig. 17) The sitter is surrounded by three walls without roof, above which the sky is visible. The latter part has been heavily retouched, but the panel is in otherwise good condition. The light comes from above and creates strong shadows on the sitter's face. She is dressed rather plainly in a black overgarment with slit, dagged sleeves, revealing the red sleeve of the garment beneath. Her hair is bound up in a tight role twisted with white ribbon around the head. Generally dated between 1440 and 1450, its authorship is less certain. Stylistically, the anonymous painter seems to have been influenced by masters such as Filippo Lippi, Domenico Veneziano, and Paolo Uccello.[14]

As David Alan Brown has aptly noted, several female profiles painted during the 1450s and 1460s stand out for their rather flat treatment of the subject. The emphasis on the sitter's high forehead and elongated neck, the decorative display of dress, made of precious fabrics, and the jewellery is characteristic of these portraits.[15] Two portraits of this group are now in the

---

[10] The style of the portrait is close to the *Annunciation* in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Rome. Some scholars, however, have dated the Metropolitan portrait earlier, to c. 1435-1436, see: Ruda 1993, p. 385.

[11] Prajda 2013, p. 73-80. Francesca's first husband was Tommaso di Neri Capponi, whom she married in 1438. The marriage did not last long, as he died in 1442.

[12] For the most recent ideas on the portrait's date and reference to earlier opinions, see: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 100-101.

[13] Apart from the losses of the inserted materials, the condition of the panel is very good. Ruda 1993, p. 412. No other examples of this technique in portraiture, within Italy or beyond, are known to me. However, Lippi's oeuvre includes examples of the use of gold ornaments on altarpieces, for instance the *Coronation of the Virgin*, now in the Uffizi (inv. no. 8352).

[14] It is sometimes suggested that this portrait is a forgery, but technical analysis has not confirmed this. For the attribution, which still remains open, results of technical research, and references to earlier literature, see Keith Christiansen in: New York 2005, p. 178.

[15] David Alan Brown in: Washington 2001, p. 112.

Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (figs. 18-19).[16] Their attribution has shifted over time, both having been credited to Paolo Uccello, Domenico Veneziano and the Master of the Castello Nativity. The Metropolitan portrait is now generally ascribed to the latter. The so-called *Young Lady of Fashion* in Boston is still often attributed to Uccello, but is more likely to have been painted by the Master of the Castello Nativity as well. Unfortunately, both portraits were overcleaned in the past and suffered extensive losses in the ornamentation of the costumes. In the case of the *Young Lady of Fashion*, the original gold brocade motifs can only still be seen on the sleeve.[17] This of course complicates a correct attribution and precise dating.

A related portrait that has retained much more of its original ornamentation is a profile attributed to Lo Scheggia, now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (fig. 20). There is some wear throughout the painted surface and several areas have been repainted, most notably the eyebrow and the shadow below the nose. The sitter's dress, however, seems to be in reasonably good condition, showing intricate patterns of dots on the bodice that were originally gilded. Along the upper edge of the portrait the letters 'G P I' are legible, which possibly refer to the sitter's initials. Strehlke supposed the crossed P should be read as Pro, Per or Par. The I being the last syllable, this could refer to the Parenti or Peruzzi family. It remains impossible to identify the lady with full certainty, nor is the meaning of the symbols between the letters clear.[18] In style and outline the portrait is very close to the previous two and in consequence is similarly dated to the 1450s or 1460s.[19] The Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris owns another portrait that is attributed to the same master and dated to c. 1460. Again, the outline of the profile is very similar, although this time the sitter is placed before a window, dressed in less ornamental fabrics (fig. 21). Her black dress has a plunging neckline at the back and her hair is bound with several ribbons and covered with a transparent veil.[20]

Another portrait dated to the 1460s is the so-called *Portrait of a Lady in Yellow* by Alesso Baldovinetti that is now in the National Gallery in London (fig. 22). The sitter is shown against a blue background. The V-shaped neckline of her dress, both at the front and the back, emphasizes her elongated neck. The face and the pleats of the dress and its sleeve have been carefully modelled. The dress now appears to be yellow, but may originally have been cream coloured. The dots on the sleeve are traces of the original gilding. The sleeve is furthermore decorated with an emblem consisting of three palm leaves with a feather on either side, tied

---

[16] A third portrait sometimes associated with this group is now in a private collection. It is ascribed to the Master of the Castello Nativity and dated to the 1460s. It deviates from all other extant Florentine profiles, since the sitter faces right. Its surface is seriously damaged and the panel is only known through a black and white photograph in the literature, see: Lachi 1995, p. 71-75, 118-119, cat. 36; Washington 2001, p. 112. Since the condition cannot be properly judged, I have not included the picture in this overview.

[17] On the condition and the attribution to Uccello of the *Young Lady of Fashion*, see: Hendy 1974, p. 267-268, endorsed by David Alan Brown in: Washington 2001, p. 112. However, Pope-Hennessy 1969, p. 151 stated there is no ground for this attribution. For the attribution of both portraits to the Master of the Castello Nativity, see: Lachi 1995, p. 119-121, cat. 37 and 38; Hudson 2008, p. 325, cat. 56; p. 328-329, cat. 60.

[18] The gilding of the sitter's undergown is a later reconstruction. Strehlke mistook this garment for the sitter's chemise and supposed the gilding does not reflect the original state. It is however very well possible that the undergown was originally gilded as well. Strehlke 2004, p. 379-380.

[19] Opinions on the dating differ only slightly, all authors placing it between 1450 and 1470, see: San Giovanni Valdarno 1999, p. 82-83, cat. 22 (1450s or 1460s, on the basis of dress and hairstyle); Strehlke 2004, p. 382 (c. 1460).

[20] Altenburg 2006, p. 28, cat. 5; Florence 2013, p. 74, cat. 5.

together with a ribbon. This emblem has not been identified yet, but may refer to the sitter's husband. The panel is still mounted in its original frame.[21]

The National Gallery owns a second portrait dated to this period, known as the *Portrait of a Lady in Red* (fig. 23). In the past, it has been attributed to a host of artists, including Piero della Francesca and Domenico Veneziano, as well as to the school of Antonio Pollaiuolo, but none of these attributions seems truly convincing, so the issue of authorship remains inconclusive. The sitter is lavishly dressed in gold brocade, patterned velvet and a pearl studded cap with a transparent veil, all of which have been carefully rendered by the painter. The neckline, which is rather low at the back, leaves bare a fair amount of skin. The painting is in good condition, with minor retouches in the face and the background.[22]

Finally, there is a group of four portraits that are associated with the Pollaiuolo brothers. Antonio del Pollaiuolo, the eldest of the two, was trained as a goldsmith, but ultimately also worked as a sculptor and a painter. According to Vasari, it was his younger brother Piero who had taught him the craft of painting.[23] Although there are no contemporary references to female portraits by their hand, several are usually ascribed to them on stylistic grounds.[24] Datable to c. 1460-1465, the earliest is the *Portrait of a Young Woman*, now in Berlin (fig. 24). The sitter, lavishly dressed in velvet and gold brocade, is shown up to the waist, placed before a blue sky and a marble balustrade encrusted with porphyry disks. The girl's dress is high-necked at the front and plunges down at the back, drawing attention to the elegant curve of her bare neck. A profile in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan shows a young woman with an intricate hairstyle, precious jewellery and a sleeve of gold brocade (fig. 25). The portrait is well preserved and since the technique of representing the gold brocaded fabric is very similar to the Berlin portrait, it is usually dated to same period.[25]

Two later portraits, dated to c. 1475 and now located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Galleria degli Uffizi respectively, are given to the Pollaiuolo brothers as well (figs. 26-27). The two profiles are very similar, showing the sitters against a blue background, both wearing a dress with low necklines at the front and the back, a sleeve of gold brocade, a pearl necklace with a pendant and a similarly shaped brooch on the chest. The Uffizi portrait has retained its original frame. Debate is ongoing as to whether to attribute these portraits to Antonio or Piero, but it is almost impossible to distinguish their individual hands from each other, especially since the surfaces of both paintings are quite worn and have been extensively repainted.[26]

---

[21] The attribution to Baldovinetti has not been doubted since it was first proposed by: Fry 1911, p. 311-312. For technical notes on the panel, see: London 2008, p. 90. The sitter is sometimes identified as the countess della Palma from Urbino, see: Rowlands 1980, p. 624, 627. This identification should however be doubted, because the resemblance of the emblem is not convincing.

[22] Davies 1961, p. 183-184.

[23] For a detailed account of the lives of Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, see: Wright 2005, p. 7-23.

[24] Antonio Pollaiuolo was however praised by Marsilio Ficino for his portrait of the Venetian ambassador Pietro da Mulino. See: Wright 2005, p. 115.

[25] Wright 2005, p. 119-124; Berlin / New York 2011, p. 101-102. Recently, Andrea di Lorenzo proposed a later date of c. 1470-1475 for the Poldi Pezzoli portrait on stylistic grounds. See: Milan 2014, p. 246. This is however unlikely, for exact parallels of the sitter's hairstyle can be found in portrait busts of the early 1460s, such as Desiderio da Settignano's bust of a woman, sometimes identified as Marietta Strozzi, in Berlin (fig. 59).

[26] For some recent different opinions on the attribution with further references to older literature, see: Poletti 2001, p. 205 (Piero); David Alan Brown in Washington 2001, p. 115 (Antonio); Wright 2005, p. 125-127 (Antonio); Stefan Weppelman in Berlin / New York 2011, p. 102-103 (Piero); Cecilia Martelli and Aldo Martelli in Milan 2014, p. 248-252, cats. 26-27 (Piero).

As already mentioned, it is impossible to determine to what extent these thirteen portraits are representative of the total production up to 1475. However, it is clear that portraits still must have been a rarity in Florence in this period. Compared to chests, or at least their painted panels, *spalliere* (wainscoting panels), and paintings of religious subject matter for the domestic realm, all of which have survived in large quantities, the number of extant portraits is extremely small. This incongruence is reflected in contemporary written sources. The workshop book of Apollonio di Giovanni with a list of commissions starting in 1446 is a case in point. Only one portrait is mentioned as opposed to 172 painted *forzieri* (chests).[27] The average chest had a price of thirty to forty florins. With a value of only two florins, this portrait was relatively cheap. Other similar artist's sources, like the *ricordi* of Alesso Baldovinetti covering the years 1449 to1491, list no portraits at all.[28]

If the focus is shifted from the artist to the patron, sources are equally scarce, but it is striking that all of the three references to female portraiture before c. 1475 that I was able to find involve the Medici.[29] The painted bust of a woman by Domenico Veneziano in the 1492 Medici inventory has already been mentioned.[30] The same inventory lists another panel portrait of a woman: 'a little panel on which is painted the portrait of Madonna Bianca', with a value of one florin.[31] This portrait most likely dates to the period under discussion here. Bianca de' Medici (1445-1488) was the daughter of Piero il Gottoso and married Gugliemo Pazzi in 1458. A third example is the portrait of Lucrezia Donati (d. 1501), who in 1465 became the mistress of Lorenzo de' Medici. This panel appears on a list of works by Verrocchio for which the Medici never paid, made up several years after the painter's death by his brother and heir Tommaso. The portrait is described as 'a wooden panel with the figure of the head of Lucrezia Donati'.[32]

Both painter's *ricordi* and family inventories suggest that portraits were still very rare in the mid-fifteenth century and were only commissioned by the most influential and wealthy families, like the Medici. The dress represented in these portraits points towards this layer of Florentine society as well. All thirteen portraits discussed here show sitters dressed in lavish attire. Even if the paint surface is sometimes damaged, the overall impression is still one of elegance and luxury. The scarcity of documentation on the sitters renders a study of their

---

[27] The workshop book is published in full in: Callman 1974, p. 76-81, app. 1. For the portrait, see p. 78, no. 73: 'Apollonio fa il ritratto al naturale, in su la cartapecora, de Giovanni di Bartolomeo Quaratesi per f.2'.

[28] Baldovinetti's *ricordi* are published in: Wedgwood Kennedy 1938, p. 236-238. Commissions comprise religious panel paintings and frescoes, designs for windows, chests, wainscoting panels, and restoration work on mosaics.

[29] The number of references to portraits slightly increases in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, see: Lydecker 1987, p. 66-67. Further systematic research of inventories, for instance in the ASF Archivio dei Pupili, may shed more light on this subject. This is however beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[30] 'Uno colmetto con dua sportelli, dipintovi dentro d'una dama, di mano di maestro Domenico da Vinegia', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 72, fol. 38v.

[31] 'Una tavoletta, dipintovi la testa di madonna Biancha', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 80, fol. 48r; Stapleford 2013, p. 157. A third female panel portrait is listed on fol. 42r: 'Un quadro suvi ritratto al naturale la testa di Madonna Alfonsina', appraised at one florin together with a Flemish painting of the heads of Christ and Mary. Alfonsina Orsini (1472-1520) married Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici in 1488 and her portrait must therefore date to the last quarter of the century. On both portraits, see also: Langedijk 1968, p. 7-8, 12-13.

[32] 'uno quadro di legname drentovj la fighura della testa della Luchrezia Donatj', Von Fabriczy 1895, p. 5, no. 7. Tommaso drew up the list in January 1496, after the Medici were exiled, hoping he could reclaim some of the money.

costume all the more urgent. The next section discusses Florentine fashion of the years 1440-1475, with a focus on the sumptuous dress worn by the sitters of these portraits.

2.1. Florentine fashion

To fifteenth-century Florentines, dress was an important matter. In his *zibaldone* Giovanni Rucellai (1403-1481) included a chronicle of the city from 1400 to 1457. He recorded Florence as a city full of beautiful buildings and important artisans and artists; sculptors, painters and extraordinary draughtsmen. Interestingly, he considered embroiderers and goldsmiths to be of the same order and explicitly praised the Florentine fashion of the time: 'The women and men were never dressed better with rich garments, well made and clean, and the women are adorned with brocades, embroidery, jewels, pearls and headdresses in the French manner that cost 200 florins each or even more.'[33] Obviously, rich and beautiful dress was as important to civic pride as art and architecture were.

In 1924 Egidia Polidori Calamandrei established our basic knowledge of Florentine women's dress, drawing from a wide variety of sources pertaining to the higher classes.[34] She ascertained that women usually wore three layers of clothing: a simple shift, the *camicia*, a dress and a more ample overgarment, with or without sleeves. *Camicie* were made of white linen, *pannolino*, or the finest quality of linen produced in northern France and named after its city of origin: *tela di rensa* (Reims) or *tela di Cambrai*.[35] Polidori Calamandrei noted a steady increase in the number of *camicie* listed in inventories in the course of fifteenth century.[36] Indeed, numerous shirts appear in trousseaux in the second half of the fifteenth century. Bartolomea Dietisalvi received twelve upon her marriage in 1459 (app. 3B, no. 45), just like Ginevra d'Ugolino Martelli when she married Cino di Filippo Rinuccini in 1460.[37] Six years later, in 1466, Nannina de' Medici had sixteen *camicie* in her trousseau (app. 3C, no. 27).

The sumptuary law of 1464 limited the use of decoration on 'tight undergarments', that is the dresses that were worn directly on top of the *camicia*. The listing of these garments gives an idea of the terminology used in Florence: '*cotte* made of silk or *gamurre*, *saie* or *rascie*,'.[38] The *gamurra* is a simple dress made of woollen cloth frequently found in inventories and bridal trousseaux.[39] In 1439, women were allowed to have as many *gamurre* as they pleased, as long as they were made of woollen fabrics and not dyed crimson or decorated with embroidery.[40] None of the surviving portraits before c. 1475 shows a woman dressed in this undergarment, which usually remained hidden under an overgarment. In narrative fresco cycles, however, the garment is often worn by servant girls. For example, Paolo Uccello depicted a maid in a *gamurra* descending a staircase and carrying a bowl of porridge in the fresco *The Birth of the Virgin* in the

---

[33] 'Le donne e gli uomini non vestirono mai meglio di vestiti ricchi, ben fatti e puliti, e le donne molto ornate di brocchati, richami, gioie, perle e chapucci alle franzese di costo di f. 200 l'uno e più.' Rucellai 1960, vol 1, p. 60-61.

[34] On Polidori Calamandrei, see: Introduction, p. 6.

[35] For instance 'camice da pannolino nostrale' and 'camice di rensa' from the 1493 trousseau of Maria di Piero Bini, published by Biagi 1899, p. 15.

[36] From the cited examples it can be deduced that the average number of camicie in the first half of the fifteenth century was about ten. In the early sixteenth century this number rose to thirty. Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 101.

[37] Ginevra Martelli's trousseau is published in: Rinuccini 1840, p. 255-256.

[38] 'vestire stretto per di sotto'; 'cotte di seta o ghamurre, saie, o rascie', Mazzi 1908, p. 45, no. 8.

[39] As Polidori Calamandrei has pointed out, exceptions can always be found. For instance, a rather fanciful *gamurra* is described in the inventory of Nannina de' Medici's trousseau of 1466: 'una ghamurra paonnazza rosina con oro, ariento e perle' (app. 3C, no. 6). See: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 37-38.

[40] Morelli 1881, p. 13; Rainey 1985, p. 447.

cathedral of Prato, nearby Florence (fig. 28).[41] The bodice of the girl's dress has a rather high waistline and is tight-fitting, as are the sleeves. A pleated skirt that reaches down to the ankle is attached to the bodice. The *saia* and the *rascia* probably had a similar cut and were named after the fabric they were made of, respectively a light woollen or silken twill and a coarse woollen cloth.[42]

The *cotta* was the most expensive type of underdress. Again, the cut was similar to the *gamurra*, but *cotte* were usually made of costly silk fabrics, which the 1464 sumptuary law allowed for.[43] In his *Diario*, Luca Landucci noted the cost of the fabric and haberdasheries to have a *cotta* made for his bride, Salvestra Pagnia, in 1466. He spent a considerable amount of money, buying fine crimson silk for 26 gold florins and 6 *soldi*, an amount roughly comparable to the annual income of an unskilled labourer. He further needed eyelets, fringes, gold ribbon and ermine skins, as well as several other fabrics like linen, plain silk (*valescio*) and fustian to line the dress.[44] Two far more expensive examples, belonging to Lucrezia Tornabuoni, are listed in the Medici inventory of 1456: a 'silk *cotta* of blue satin brocaded with silver with sleeves of silver cloth' and a '*cotta* of crimson pile-on-pile velvet with sleeves of gold brocade' (app. 3A, nos. 6-7). The latter can be compared with the *cotta* worn by the sitter of the anonymous *Lady in Red* (fig. 23). The lady is shown wearing a *cotta* of red purple velvet with similar sleeves of gold brocade.

Cotte could be worn on their own, but were usually combined with an overdress, as is confirmed by the sumptuary law of 1456. That year the Florentine government limited the number of silk garments a woman was allowed to have to two: 'Women can have two dresses of silk for their own use and to wear as an outer garment, only one per season, one for winter and the other for summer, *cioppa* or *giornea* as they please, and one *cotta* for underneath'.[45] The *cioppa* was an overgarment with sleeves, worn especially during winter, whereas *giornee* are never recorded with sleeves and were worn during summer. Lippi's portrait in Berlin shows the sitter wearing a green *cioppa*, lined with grey fur (fig. 16). The long sleeves could cover the sitter's hands completely.[46] A more luxurious example is worn by the female sitter of Lippi's Scolari double portrait (fig. 15). The red *cioppa* is lined with white fur, possibly ermine, which was the most expensive kind and therefore prohibited in the sumptuary law of 1449.[47]

Lippi's double portrait shows two popular types of sleeves. The *cioppa* has a wide sleeve, known as the *manica a gozzo*, which has a large opening that reveals the gold brocade sleeves of the dress worn underneath. The latter sleeve is full at the top, gathered at the elbow and tight-fitting around the underarm. The sitter of Pollaiuolo's portrait in Berlin wears a dress with similarly cut sleeves (fig. 24). This model was fashionable up until the 1460s, when it was replaced by a sleeve that was more closely fitting from the shoulder downwards.[48] The two

---

[41] Fiorentini Capitani and Ricci 1992, p. 58-59.
[42] On the *gamurra*, *saia* and *rascia*, see: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 36-38, 44, 53.
[43] 'Anchora possino avere due cotte di seta...', Mazzi 1908, p. 45, no. 7. On the *cotta*, see: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 41-42, 46-47.
[44] For an overview of the average income of different professions in fifteenth-century Florence, see: Frick 2002, p. 97. Landucci noted the price of the silk, the costliest component, in gold florins, whereas the other amounts spent were listed in *fiorini piccoli*. Landucci 1985, p. 7-8.
[45] 'Le donne possono avere insino in due robe di seta per loro uso e per di sopra solamente a uno tempo, l'una pel verno, l'altra per la state, cioppa o giornea a loro piacimento, e una cotta per di sotto', cited from: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 44.
[46] In 1415 the use of sleeves hiding the hands was forbidden, an indication this style was actually very popular. Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 58.
[47] 'Non possino portare in fodere di maniche [...] ermellini', Florentine sumptuary law enacted on 28 April 1449. Cited from: Rainey 1985, app. 11, p. 766.
[48] For an overview of the development of the sleeve, see: Birbari 1975, p. 19-22.

previously mentioned *cotte* from the Medici inventory are examples of the preference for sleeves made of a contrasting fabric. Sleeves were usually a separate part of a garment, attached to the bodice with hooks and eyelets or laces. This not only created the possibility of playing with different colours and textures within one garment, it also allowed combining a relatively modest garment like the woollen *gamurra* with more costly sleeves. The cheaper parts of the dress probably remained hidden under the *cioppa*, whereas the sleeves were visible through slits, as is the case in Lippi's double portrait.

In the sumptuary laws issued during the first three quarters of the fifteenth century, a steadily increasing tolerance towards costly sleeves can be observed. In 1415, *gamurre* with sleeves of velvet or any other kind of silk were forbidden altogether. The 1439 law forbade all trimming and embroidery in gold, silver or silk on *gamurre*, except for the sleeves, which was revoked in 1449, when all decoration was limited to the cuffs of the sleeves. In 1456 however, one pair of sleeves of gold or silver brocade was allowed and in 1464 this was extended to two pairs of any colour, one brocaded with gold and the other with silver, or two pairs of mixed gold and silver brocade.[49] Indeed, many examples of *gamurre* with sleeves of brocade, velvet or other silk fabrics can be found in inventories. For instance Salvestra Pagnia received 'a purple *gamurra* with sleeves of brocade' in her trousseau.[50]

Besides the popular combination of *gamurra* and *cioppa*, the *cotta* and the *giornea* often figure together. The sleeveless *giornea* was often open at the sides, revealing large parts of the dress underneath. It was therefore usually combined with the luxurious silk *cotta*.[51] Most extant Florentine profile portraits present women with this type of sumptuous clothing. The sitter of the *Young Lady of Fashion* wears a blue, sleeveless *giornea* with a typical plunging neckline at the back on top of a *cotta* with sleeves of gold brocade (fig. 19). Although the surface has been badly damaged and partly repainted, it is still clear her clothing must have been very costly. Her face and headdress, consisting of a head brooch and several pearl rosettes, are actually the best-preserved parts of the painting.[52] The other female portraits that are stylistically closely related to this panel, the Metropolitan portrait by the Master of the Castello Nativity and Lo Scheggia's *Portrait of a Woman* in Philadelphia, show similar dress and jewellery (figs. 18, 20). Another striking example of the combination of a *cotta* with a *giornea* is Pollaiuolo's *Portrait of a Young Woman* in Berlin (fig. 24).

In the vast majority of the portraits painted, the ladies wear their hair bound up, decorated with ribbons or a little cap, sometimes covered with a light veil (figs. 16-27). Veils, ribbons and laces figure in large quantities in trousseaux, like the 'ribbons of various materials to

---

[49] Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 60; Rainey 1985, p. 446-452. This ongoing liberalization has sometimes been interpreted as a sign of the failure of the city's government to enforce its laws. Rainey, however, noted that the legislators themselves regarded these new laws as willing attempts to concede women some necessary ostentation of affluence that could contribute to the city's prestige as well. He noted a similar growing tolerance of the use of jewellery, especially rings, and the permitted quantities of pearls in these years, see: Rainey 1985, p. 435-440.

[50] For Salvestra's 'gamurra pagonazza, con maniche di broccatello', see: Landucci 1985, p. 6. Further examples of woollen *gamurre* with silk sleeves may be found in the Pucci inventory of 1449: Merkel 1897, p. 171, no. 6, p. 177, nos. 6 and 7, p. 180, no. 3, p. 186, no. 22. For many more examples, see: Baldi 2006, p. 290-291.

[51] This is also confirmed by a letter from Alessandra Macinghi, who wrote to her son that his wife Fiammetta needed a new *giornea*, because it was not the time of year to wear *cioppe*: 'E la mi dice la Fiammetta ch'io ti scriva ch'ella vorrebbe farsi una giornea di saia nera milanese per questo San Giovanni [24 June], […] e invero ella n'ha bisogno che non è tempo allora di portare le cioppe, e poi potrà portare la cotta'. Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 41-44. On the *giornea*, see also: Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 249-251.

[52] Washington 2001, p. 112.

bind around head' in that of Bartolomea Dietisalvi (app. 3B, no. 53). A wide variety of caps can be found, like the *berretta*, *cuffia*, *cappello* and *cappellina*. The differences between these various headdresses are, however, difficult to establish and it remains unclear which name belongs to which shape.[53]

In the sumptuary law of 1449, the Florentine government noted the rise of foreign headgear and resolved to ban it from the city: 'They [Florentine women] cannot wear on their heads headgear of any material, jagged or not, with *corne* (horns) or *selle* (sadles) or caps or other things with similar names in a foreign style.[54] The ban was repeated in 1456: 'they cannot wear headdresses and caps, neither *corna* nor *selle* in the French and Flemish manner or in any style that is usually indicated as foreign'.[55] The *corna* was a headdress shaped in the form of two horns, as can be seen on a *spalliera* (wainscoting panel) depicting a wedding scene by Lo Scheggia, now in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence.[56] A detail shows two of the guests wearing *corne*, notably the seated lady on the right and the dancing lady on the right (fig. 29). 'Two pairs of *corne'*, appraised at 200 florins, were part of Nannina de' Medici's wedding gifts from her husband (app. 3C).

The *sella* is also worn on Lo Scheggia's *spalliera* panel (fig. 29, middle dancing lady). It consists of padded roll of fabric shaped like a horse saddle, hence its name, mounted on a cap. On either side of the head a piece of the fabric flows freely, one extending further down than the other. Lippi's Scolari portrait provides us with an example that can be observed in more detail (fig. 15). The sitter's cap is decorated with a row of small pearls. The padded role on top is made of a deep red fabric, richly embroidered with gold thread, sequins and seed pearls, edged with gold fringes. Polidori Calamandrei stated the *sella* was fashionable in Florence between 1450 and 1470.[57] Its ban in the 1449 sumptuary law, however, indicates it became popular somewhat earlier, during the 1440s. Since it was difficult to keep up with fashion developments, lawmakers were usually behind the times, imposing bans only after a new fashion was well established. The rise of French and Flemish headdress in Florence therefore seems to have taken place between the sumptuary law of 1439, in which foreign influences are not mentioned yet, and 1449.[58] This provides a *terminus post quem* for Lippi's portrait, confirming the date of c. 1440-1444.[59]

---

[53] Polidori Calamandrei made a distinction between the *berretta*, a simple coif, and the *cuffia*, a cap with triangular extensions on either side that reached down to the shoulders or the breast. It is not clear, however, on which criteria she based this distinction. See: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 79-80.

[54] 'Non possino portare in capo cappuccino d'alcuna ragione, frastagliati o non frastagliati, con corna o vero selle o chappelletti o altre cose di che vocaboli si sieno intorno acciò alla di là', Rainey 1985, app. 11, p. 768, no. 17.

[55] 'non possino portare cappucci, cappelletti, nè corna, nè selle alla fiamminga e alla francese in alcun modo che volgarmente si dice alla di là', cited from: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 84.

[56] This *spalliera* panel depicts a contemporary Florentine wedding with people in fashionable dress. It is important, though, to be cautious when using *spalliere* and *cassoni* as a visual source for the history dress, especially when mythological scenes are depicted. For an analysis of the 'sartorial message' of several panels representing the story of the Sabine women, in which contemporary features have been mixed with exotic features, see: Campbell 2000, p. 137-145. On this particular panel, see: San Giovanni Valdarno 1999, p. 58-61, cat. 13.

[57] Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 83-84, repeated by Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 290.

[58] In France the horn-shaped headdress, both with and without the padded roll, was named *hennin* and was worn from the early fifteenth century onwards. See: Buren 2011, p. 317-318. The Florentine sumptuary law of 1439 is published by: Morelli 1881, p. 13-16. On the struggle of governments to stay abreast of fashion changes, see: Kovesi Killerby 2002, p. 160-161.

[59] Some scholars tend to date the portrait earlier, most notably Ruda 1993, p. 385-386. He states the headdress appears as early as the late 1430s on cassone panels by Apollonio di Giovanni, although he

Bernardo Rucellai's wedding gifts to his bride Nannina de' Medici are representative of the type of jewellery worn in mid-Quattrocento Florence (app. 3B). He gave her two necklaces; one that is described as 'rich' consisted of diamonds, rubies and pearls and had a total value of 1,200 florins, the other was made of large pearls with a point-cut diamond pendant. Another showpiece was the 'brochetta di spalla', a shoulder brooch with a balas ruby and pearls that had cost him 1,000 florins. A second brooch was to be worn on the head. This combination of necklace, head and shoulder brooch is often represented in portraits of women. Lippi's Scolari bride wears a necklace with large pearls and a brooch with a gemstone encircled by pearls on her shoulder (fig. 15).[60] A head brooch is fastened in the middle of the padded roll of her *sella*. Head brooches also figure in portraits ascribed to the Master of the Castello Nativity, Lo Scheggia and by Baldovinetti (figs. 18-20, 22). Three Pollaiuolo sitters wear head brooches combined with strings of pearls that have been intertwined with their hair (figs. 25-27). These strings, known as *frenelli*, were very popular as well. Nannina received one that consisted of large pearls, appraised at 500 florins.[61]

Nearly all fifteenth-century jewellery is lost, but there are some rare pieces from the Franco-Flemish region that are very similar to the jewels in the Pollaiuolo portraits in New York and Florence. Both ladies wear a more or less identical shoulder brooch, consisting of a winged figure holding a ruby encircled by pearls and other gems (figs. 26-27). A gold brooch, now in the British Museum, found together with two smaller brooches in the river Meuse in the nineteenth century, has a similar shape (fig. 30).[62] The smaller pieces resemble the jewels worn in the hair by the sitter of the New York portrait.

2.2. Florentine fabrics

Giovanni Rucellai not only praised the Florentine fashions of his day. He also showed great admiration for the city's textile business:

> The silk industry never produced more textiles than in these days, and never has richer cloth of gold been produced or silk of a better price than now. And in this period the production of gold thread started in our city, which today is better and more beautiful than anywhere else; and the same is being said of fustian.[63]

In a similar eulogistic vein, Benedetto Dei stated in his chronicle that 'beautiful Florence has eighty-three magnificent and highly esteemed silk shops' and he further listed several expensive fabrics, like gold and silver brocade, that were produced in Florence and exported to all the

---

does not mention any examples. Moreover, the chronology of Apollonio's work has not been established with certainty and is based on only two securely dated works, the earliest having been made in 1442, see: Callman 1974, p. 16.

[60] Prajda tried to identify this shoulder brooch as the jewel listed in an inventory of the Scolari palazzo dated 1424. The jewel belonged to Francesca di Scolari's mother and is described as consisting of a yellow balas ruby and three pearls, valued at 300 florins. See: Prajda 2013, p. 76. However, the brooch represented does not resemble this description at all, since it is made up of one balas ruby and four pearls, the fourth being just visible behind the large central balas ruby.

[61] On the *frenello*, see: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 81.

[62] For a technical description and similar pieces, see: Brown 1992, p. 415-418.

[63] 'Il mestieri della seta non lavorò mai tanti drappi quanto in questo tenpo, e mai si feciono i più ricchi drappi d'oro e di seta di maggiore pregio che al presente. E in questa età si principiò fare nella nostra città l'oro filato, che al dì oggi si fa migliore e più bello che in niun altro luogo; e il simile si dicie di fustani.' Rucellai 1960, p. 61.

important European trading cities.[64] Indeed, Florence was an important centre for the production of various fabrics, notably high-quality woollen cloth and luxury textiles made of silk. [65] The most important types of silk fabrics that often figure in inventories will be briefly discussed here. The reader should bear in mind that the terminology used for fabrics in the fifteenth century can be ambiguous and while some terms will be clear to the modern reader, others will not. This survey is therefore not exhaustive, nor does it go into the technical details of the production process, as these are beyond the scope of this research.[66]

One of the most popular types of silk fabric was satin, named *zetano* or *raso* in fifteenth-century Italy. The satin weave creates a smooth fabric with a shiny effect, which is further enhanced by the natural gloss of silk. Nannina de' Medici for example had a *giornea* and a *cotta* of satin (app. 3C, nos. 3, 7). Also often used is damask or *domaschino*, named after the city of Damascus. It is a fabric in which a pattern is created by alternating a satin weave with another type of weave. Damask could be monochrome or two-toned, with a weft and warp in different colours. It was used for a multitude of dress items. Nannina's trousseau for instance lists a '*giornea* of white and crimson damask with fringes and pearls', a *saia* with 'sleeves of white and red damask' and a 'nightcap of floral damask' (app. 3C, nos. 4, 9, 42). In 1461 Ginevra Martelli received three damask dresses: a *cioppa* and a *giornea* of crimson damask decorated with pearls and fringes and a *cotta* of *alessandrino* (deep-blue) damask with sleeves with floral motives.[67]

Satin and damask could be further enhanced by brocading, i.e. adding gold or silver threads to the weave to create a pattern.[68] Numerous examples can also be found in inventories. Nannina was given several lengths of brocaded fabrics: '22 *braccia* of brocaded green damask', '15 *braccia* of brocaded blue damask in one piece' and '1¼ *braccio* of crimson gold brocade' (app. 3C, nos. 19, 20, 23). Lucrezia Tornabuoni had a '*cioppa* of black velvet brocaded with gold', a '*giornea* of crimson damask brocaded with gold', a '*cioppa* of purple pile-on-pile velvet, lined with green brocade', and a '*cotta* of blue satin brocaded with silver' (app. 3A, nos. 1-3, 6). The use of brocades was especially popular in sleeves. An example is the '*cotta* of crimson damask, with brocaded and embroidered sleeves of crimson damask' that Bernardo Rinieri gave to his spouse Bartolomea Dietisalvi (app. 3B, no. 2). In her trousseau, provided by her father, Bartolomea also received a 'purple *gamurra* with sleeves of *baldacchino'* (app. 3B, no. 23). *Baldacchino*, a name that probably derives from Baldacco, Italian for Baghdad, is a type of lampas silk that could be executed in one or more colours with additional brocading of gold or silver threads.[69]

Velvet or *velluto*, a silk fabric with a cut pile, was also often used for dress. Besides plain velvet there were several forms of figured velvet. Polychrome figured velvets were known as *velluti appiciolati*. Pollaiuolo's portrait of a girl in Berlin provides a stunning example of a *giornea* made of this kind of fabric (fig. 24). A *velluto raso*, or voided velvet, is a kind of velvet in which part of the ground is left free of the pile to create a pattern. This can be seen in the *Lady in Red*,

---

[64] 'Florentie bella à 83 botteghe d'arte di seta, magnifiche e di gran pregio', Dei 1984, p. 82.
[65] I will not elaborate on Florentine cloth production here, because it is of less importance to the dress depicted in female portraiture up to the 1470s. On this subject, see: Hoshino 1980, p. 153-303.
[66] On the problem of textile terminology, see: Monnas 2009, p. 13. Descriptions of fabrics are based on Monnas 2009, p. 295-303, app. 1 'Looms, Textile Types and Historic Terminology', to which I also refer for more technical descriptions, including weave diagrams.
[67] Rinuccini 1840, p. 255.
[68] Brocading is not necessarily limited to metal threads, but was also done with coloured silk. Alternatively, gold or silver threads could be added as a supplementary weft (lampas), which was less labour intensive, but more expensive, because it required a larger amount of gold or silver.
[69] Lampas is a category of silk fabrics with a pattern created by one or more additional wefts. Although the term came into use in the fourteenth century, its current use dates from the nineteenth century, see: Monnas 2009, p. 298.

whose bodice is made of voided velvet (fig. 23). Since the ground was often in satin weave, this type of velvet was also indicated as *zetano vellutato*. A pattern could also be created through variations of pile height, a so-called *velluto alto e basso* or pile-on-pile velvet. Lucrezia Tornabuoni had no fewer than three garments of this costly fabric, a *cioppa*, a *giornea* and a *cotta* (app. 3A, nos. 3, 4, 7).

Velvet could be brocaded as well, or little loops of gold thread could be woven into the fabric, a technique that was developed in the 1420s. Single loops could be added every now and again amidst the pile, an effect that was known as 'alluciolato', or loops could be grouped to create a pattern, which was called 'arriciato'. These two forms are combined in the sleeve of the *Lady in Red*, where floral patterns in gold loops are alternated with little loops scattered on a red pile (fig. 23). The most luxurious kind of gold looping, 'ricco sopra riccio' (loop over loop), consisted of a combination of loops of different heights forming a pattern. This cloth of gold was by far the most expensive fabric in the fifteenth century.

Since the nineteenth century the characteristic patterns of brocaded fabrics and cloths of gold have been generally designated as pomegranate motifs. However, besides the pomegranate, the range of motifs also included thistles and pinecones.[70] Typical examples can be observed on the sleeves of various sitters, for instance of the *Young Lady of Fashion*, Lo Scheggia's *Portrait of a Woman*, and the *Portrait of a Lady in Red* (figs. 19-20, 23). The portraits by the Pollaiuolo brothers also showcase rich gold brocaded silks. In the Uffizi and Metropolitan portraits, the pattern on the sleeves is given great prominence (figs. 26-27). The sitter of their portrait, now in Berlin, wears not only sleeves with gold brocaded palmettes, but also a *giornea* of white silk with green and red thistle and leaf shapes (fig. 24).[71]

The price of a gold brocaded textile was highly dependent on the quality and amount of gold thread and on the complexity of the pattern. Crucial to the value of any fabric, however, was its colour. Dyestuffs, especially those used for certain shades of red and blue, could be extremely costly. Kermes (*chermisi*), a dye obtained from a variety of shield lice, was the most expensive. It was used for a variety of red hues, ranging from pink and purple to crimson and deep red.[72] Even more expensive than a fabric dyed with pure crimson, were mixed colours, such as *alessandrino* (deep blue), *paonazzo* (purple or violet) or *morello* (murrey), which required a great amount of skill to create because the dying process was so complex.[73]

Notwithstanding Giovanni Rucellai's abundant praise of the city's silk industry and the lavish dress of gold brocade, decorated with embroidery and pearls, research has actually shown that only a very small number of Florentine men could afford to dress their wives in silk and gold brocaded fabrics. Although Nannina de' Medici received several lengths of gold brocaded damask, she had only one *cotta* dyed *alessandrino* with brocaded sleeves. Yet with a dowry of 2,500 florins, more than twice as much as the average dowry of the Florentine ruling class, she

---

[70] For various examples of extant fabrics with pomegranate designs, see: Milan 1983, p. 101-113, section 'Motivi decorative: cardo e melagrana'. Also compare the sections 'La composizione "a cammino"' on p. 70-83 and 'La composizione "a griccia"' on p. 84-100, which both figure numerous examples.

[71] The Museo del Tessuto in Prato preserves two pieces of figures velvet that, apart from the addition of small blue flowers, are remarkably similar to the fabric depicted in Pollaiuolo's Berlin portrait (Collezione Comune di Prato e CariPrato, inv. nos. 81.01.75-81.01.76), photograph in: Boccherini 1999, p. 40, cat. 11.

[72] On the different varieties of kermes and their use, see: Munro 1983, p. 15-18. The much cheaper madder was also used as a red dye, but its use tended to be limited to wool.

[73] Monnas 2009, p. 24-25. An important source for the price of silk fabrics is a fifteenth-century manuscript *Trattato della seta*, which describes the process of weaving and dying and lists the prices of dying different colours and many types of silk fabrics. Published by: Gargiolli 1868, p. 78-79, no. XLIX and p. 98-102, nos. LXV-LXVIII.

belonged to the wealthiest levels of Florentine society.[74] Rembrandt Duits compared the wages of Florentine entrepreneurs and skilled craftsmen with the prices of satin and gold brocade, concluding that a successful businessman could hardly afford enough gold brocade for a complete garment. Even the Medici, who owned more silk than any other Florentine family, could not live up to the huge spending power of the Burgundian or Italian courts, where the use of luxury textiles was much more common.[75]

3.1. Dress and marriage in Florentine *ricordanze*

An important and often used source for the history of Florentine dress are the numerous *ricordanze*, family logbooks. Although similar *libri di famiglia* were found elsewhere in Italy as well, they enjoyed particular popularity in Florence. Often serving as a means to show ancient ancestry or to underline social promotion, *ricordanze* could include genealogies, reports on important family events like marriages, births and deaths, accounts of the family business and other transactions, often copied from notarial documents or account books.[76] Especially of interest to the history of dress are the entries on marriage, which give a rare insight into the specifics of the bride's dowry, provided by her father, and the gifts she received from her husband, the counter-trousseau. The dowry consisted of an amount of money, part of which was given to the groom in cash, and the other part in the form of a trousseau, the *donora*, which included mainly clothing and some household utensils for the bride. An example is the trousseau of Bartolomea Dietisalvi, recorded in the *ricordanze* of her husband Bernardo Rinieri, a wealthy banker (app. 3B). As was the custom, it is divided into two parts: the *stimate* (appraised items) and the *non stimate* (unappraised items).[77]

In the months preceding the marriage, the groom provided his bride with gifts, usually clothing and jewellery, which made up the counter-trousseau. Traditionally, the jewellery was delivered at the bride's parental house in a small box, known as a *forzerino*.[78] Bernardo Rinieri noted these items as well (app. 3B, nos. 1-17).[79] He gave Bartolomea a *cioppa* of crimson damask embroidered with pearls, a *cotta* of crimson damask with brocaded and embroidered sleeves, a pair of knives, a head brooch, a shoulder brooch and two necklaces with *agnus dei* pendants. He delivered a *frenello* of pearls to her father's house in July 1458 and Bernardo further noted that he presented more ounces of pearls from October to January.

Other family books contain detailed accounts of the making of these garments. An often-cited example is that of the silk merchant Marco Parenti, who married Caterina Strozzi in 1447 with a dowry of 1,000 florins, half of which came in the form of the trousseau. Caterina came from one the wealthiest families of Florence and although the Strozzi were still banned in 1447, the marriage added considerably to Parenti's status. In his *ricordanze*, he first listed Caterina's trousseau, consisting among other items of a *cioppa* of white damask, trimmed with

---

[74] For this analysis and other examples, see: Monnas 2009, p. 28.
[75] Duits 2008, p. 65-81, 91-97.
[76] Rubinstein 2000, p. 39. On *ricordanze* as a Florentine phenomenon, see: Ciappelli 2000, p. 27-30. I thank Laura Overpelt for sharing her ideas on the use of *ricordanze* as a source for art history research with me.
[77] For a general introduction on *donora* with references to earlier literature, see: Musacchio 2003, p. 177-179. A more thorough study, with particular attention for legal aspects and the type of objects usually given, is: Klapisch-Zuber 1989, p. 193-211.
[78] Klapisch-Zuber 1985, p. 219-220; Chabot 1994, p. 426-427. For the use of *forzerini* and several surviving examples, see: Musacchio 2008, p. 130-135.
[79] Although this part of Bernardo's *ricordanze* has been published, contrary to Bartolomea's trousseau, it is not very well known to historians of dress. Del Badia 1896, p. 190-191. On Bernardo Rinieri, see: Lydecker 1987, p. 96-97.

marten, two white woollen *cioppe*, a *gamurra* of white and blue *saia* with green velvet sleeves, another blue *gamurra* with velvet sleeves, sixteen *braccia* of red cloth, one *braccia* of white damask, seventeen *camicie*, thirty handkerchiefs, a necklace of coral beads and a girdle decorated with silver.[80]

Then Marco noted the purchases he made for more garments for Caterina. He started with 'a *giornea* of crimson voided satin velvet for the wife', followed by a *cotta* of the same fabric, supplied from his own shop. Every single purchase, from eyelets to lining fabrics, was noted as was the cost for the tailoring of the garments. A headdress in the form of a garland (*ghirlanda*) was made, decorated with roses of peacock feathers, enameled metalwork and pearls. Marco also bought a golden shoulder brooch with two sapphires and three pearls.[81] Lo Scheggia's *Adimari wedding* gives an impression of the richness of this type of dress (fig. 29). One of the wedding guests wears a *cotta* with a *giornea* and a *ghirlanda* of peacock feathers on her head. Caterina's mother, Alessandra Macinghi, was apparently delighted with Marco's purchases. In a letter to her son Filippo, living in exile in Naples, she announced the news of Caterina's engagement, exclaiming enthusiastically:

> Oh and I have not told you about Marco yet, he's always saying to her "If you want anything, ask for it." When she was betrothed he ordered a gown of crimson velvet for her made of silk and an overgown of the same fabric, which is the most beautiful cloth in Florence. He had it made in his own workshop. And he had a garland of feathers and pearls made which cost eighty florins, the headdress underneath has two strings of pearls costing sixty florins or more. When she goes out she will have more than four hundred florins on her back. And he ordered some crimson velvet to be made up into long sleeves lined with marten, for when she goes to her husband's house. And he is having a rose-coloured gown made, embroidered with pearls. He feels he cannot do enough having things made, because she is beautiful and he wants her to look even more so.[82]

Another example is Francesco di Matteo Castellani, who agreed to marry Lena Alamanni as his second wife in November 1448. In December that same year, Francesco had several garments made for his future wife and in his *ricordanze* he kept close track of every order he placed with the tailor and the embroiderer. The showpiece was to become a *cioppa* made of 'alto e basso chermisi' (crimson pile-on-pile velvet) with gold and pearl embroidery on the bodice and sleeves representing a sun with golden rays, large and small, and an eagle rising towards these rays. Besides the magnificent *cioppa*, Francesco placed more embroidery orders, for two *cioppette* (small or short *cioppe*). Unfortunately, the crimson *cioppa* with the eagle and the sunbeams was never worn, because the embroiderer, master Giovanni Gilberti, died before finishing it. In July 1452, Francesco went to great lengths to retrieve all his pearls and gold

---

[80] For the complete list, see: Philips 1987, p. 39-40; Muzzarelli 1999, p. 100.

[81] Marco Parenti's purchases are discussed at length in: Frick 2002, p. 123-128. See also: Philips 1987, p. 42-43.

[82] 'O! non ti dico di Marco, cioè il marito, che sempre gli dice: Chiedi ciò che tu vuogli. E come si maritò, gli tagliò una cotta di zetani vellutato chermisi; e così la roba di quello medesimo; ed è il più bel drappo che sia in Firenze; che se lo fece 'n bottega. E fassi una grillada di penne con perle, che viene fiorini ottantta; e l'acconciatura di sotto, e' sono duo trecce di perle, che viene fiorini sessanta o più: che quando andrà fuori, arà in dosso più che fiorini quattrocento. E ordina di fare un velluto chermisi, per farlo colle maniche, foderato di martore, quando n'andrà a marito; e fa una cioppa rosata, ricamata di perle. E non può saziarsi di fare delle cose, che è bella, e vorebbe paressi vie più [...]', Alessandra Macinghi to Filippo Strozzi, Florence, 24 August 1447. Macinghi Strozzi 1997, p. 30-31 (translation: Heather Gregory).

thread back from the workshop and in the end he had the *cioppa* dismantled.[83] In the case of Francesco Castellani, the *cioppa* was probably stripped down because it was never finished, but it was not unusual for finery purchased for a wedding to be sold or lent to others later.[84]

Florentines had good reasons to meticulously note all the expenses incurred for their weddings. The cost and splendour of the dress not only contributed to their family's status, there were legal considerations as well. Although the dress and jewellery were presented as gifts to the bride, officially they remained the property of the giver, that is the bride's father or her husband. If her husband died and the widow returned to her father's house, she would take only the sum of the dowry and her trousseau with her, leaving the counter-trousseau to her husband's heirs.[85] In order to avoid discussion afterwards, it was crucial to record the monetary value of the dowry and the bridal gifts.

On the basis of *ricordanze*, Adrian Randolph argued that the typical combination of head and shoulder brooch, increasingly replaced by a pendant later on in the fifteenth century, functioned as a visual sign of marriage. Besides the aforementioned counter-trousseau of Bernardo Rucellai for Nannina de' Medici, he cited the examples of Bartolomeo di Tommaso Sassetti, who listed a brooch valued at one florin among the wedding gifts to his bride in his *ricordanze*, as well as the counter-trousseau of Giovanni di Domenico Buoninsegni. In 1468 he gave his wife a balas ruby for a pendant, a gold brooch with a balas ruby and four large pearls, a pendant and a *frenello* made up of 240 pearls, with a total value of more than 103 florins.[86] Randolph further cited the sumptuary law of 1464, which allowed brides to wear exactly these ornaments up to a limited period after the wedding:

> Moreover, they [Florentine women] may wear necklaces, veils and two brooches – one for the head and one for the shoulder. And these above mentioned things they may wear for three years from the day that they went to marriage, thus [also] for those who have already gone to marriage, as for those who will go. And after the said three years, they may wear the necklace alone and only one brooch for another three years, and after that it is entirely forbidden that they can wear any of the above said things.[87]

Randolph argued that in return for these material gifts, the bride gave her sexuality to her husband, an idea that is indebted to Marcel Mauss's anthropological theory of the reciprocity of gift giving. Thus, according to Randolph, in portraiture the bridal body is 'marked' as such by the jewellery.[88]

Randolph's theory has found wide acceptance in subsequent scholarship. Today, portraits of women with jewellery are generally regarded as wedding portraits and, subsequently,

---

[83] Castellani 1992, p. 117-125, 161-163. The sections from Francesco's *ricordanze* regarding Lena's clothing have been previously published in: Carnesecchi 1906, p. 151-154. See also: Frick 2002, p. 117-122.
[84] For examples, see: Klapisch-Zuber 1985, p. 227-231.
[85] Klapisch-Zuber 1985, p. 224-227; Bestor 1999, p. 28-30.
[86] Randolph 1998, p. 187. Earlier, a similar idea was proposed by: Simons 1988, p. 9.
[87] 'Anchora possino portare collari o collane, vezi, et due brochette, una per in capo er una per la spalla; et queste sopra dette cose le possino portare tre anni dal dì che ne saranno ite a marito, così per quelle che per lo passato sono ite a marito come per l'avenire andranno: Et finiti i detti tre anni, possino portare la collana o vero collare solo et una brochetta sola per insino altri tre anni, et di poi sia vietato interamente loro el potere portare qualunque delle sopra dette cose.' Mazzi 1908, p. 44, no. 3. Translation: Randolph 1998, p. 189 (with the exception of 'potere', that Randolph translates as 'power'). Randolph erroneously regards this as the law of 1472, a mistake that has been often repeated.
[88] Randolph 1998, p. 193-196.

those without jewellery as representations of women before or several years after marriage.[89] Some scholars even went so far as to describe garments from the counter-trousseau as 'wedding dresses', as if they were visually recognizable as meant to be worn by the bride during the marriage celebration and their use limited to that occasion exclusively.[90] This concept of the wedding gown, however, dates back no further than the nineteenth century, when brides started to wear white exclusively.[91] There is only one fifteenth-century Florentine example of a pendant that was described as 'una pendetta da moglianza' (literally 'a wifehood pendant').[92] In sum, there is no particular reason to assume that garments and jewellery were regarded as wedding finery in the modern sense of the word.

Although there is no doubt about the importance of lavish dress and jewellery in the context of marriage, Randolph's theory should be rejected. Gender studies have always presented marriage as the only occasion in a woman's life when she was physically adorned, stressing the selling of dress and jewellery within a few years after marriage.[93] However, *ricordanze* are not to be equated with account books, which as a rule are objective. The emphasis on dress and jewellery in connection to weddings in these books is sufficiently explained by its legal and financial implications as well as its importance to family history. Marriage was one of many occasions for dressing up and donning jewellery, and other sources shed more light on these aspects. Randolph for instance ignored passages of the sumptuary law allowing unmarried girls and women of rank to wear anything they wanted. The next section considers the meaning of wearing jewellery and moments in women's lives besides marriage in which sumptuous dress played an important role.

3.2. Dressing up before and beyond marriage

To be sure, the numerous *ricordanze* still testify to the connection of personal adornment and marriage, as does Alessandra Macinghi in a letter. When she believes a suitable wife has been found for her son Filippo, she writes in an often-quoted passage:

> Get the jewels ready and let them be beautiful, because we have found you a wife. Being beautiful and the wife of Filippo Strozzi, she will need beautiful jewels. Just as you have honour in other things, she does not want to be lacking in this.[94]

It is perfectly clear from this passage that wearing jewellery is inextricably linked with the honour of the bride and thereby with the entire family. The discussion of expenditure on dress and jewellery found in *ricordanze* has already shown how valuable these objects actually were. Lydecker's analysis of the financial situation of the Florentine patrician Luigi Martelli confirms

---

[89] See for instance: Woods-Marsden 2001, p. 65-68; Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 48; Wright 2005, p. 118; Tosi Brandi 2014, p. 103-117.
[90] For example Frick 2002, p. 115-132, who even named this chapter 'The Making of Wedding Gowns'.
[91] The nobility started the use of white and silver for wedding gowns in the seventeenth century, but white wedding dresses only became commonplace in the nineteenth century. It was not until well into the twentieth century that the cut of wedding dresses was distinguishable from contemporary fashion. See: Ehrman 2011, p. 23, 41, 131.
[92] Ricordanze of Niccolò Ferrucci, 28 February 1483, cited by Randolph 1998, p. 187.
[93] This happens often with a negative tone of voice, for instance Klapisch-Zuber 1985, p. 227, who calls the fact that Marco Parenti sells part of the pearls and gems bought for Caterina 'pitiless'.
[94] 'Metti in ordine le gioie, e belle, chè la moglie è trovata. Essendo bella, e di Filippo Strozzi, è di bisogno di belle gioie; chè come tu hai l'onore nell'altre cose, en questo non vuole mancare.' Alessandra Macinghi to Filippo Strozzi, Florence, 26 July 1465. Macinghi Strozzi 1997, p. 150-151 (translation: Heather Gregory, with minor adaptions).

this. In 1487, a year before his marriage, forty-three per cent of his property consisted of jewels, most of them inherited from his father.[95] Wearing this kind of expensive jewellery was a direct visual expression of a familial wealth and honour.

The 1464 sumptuary law offered families two possibilities to show off their wealth in the form of jewellery. Brides were allowed to wear necklaces and brooches up to three years after their marriage and, secondly, unmarried girls could wear almost anything they wanted:

> Furthermore that none of the bans are meant for unmarried girls, who are exempted from the present law, except that they cannot wear more gold and silver brocade than married women are allowed, nor wear longer garments, [that is] a train, than the mentioned married women.[96]

There was nothing exceptional about this exemption, for already in 1449 the law allowed 'unmarried girls […] to wear any object and garment on their body or their head as they please', except for long trains, foreign headdresses and low necklines.[97]

The regularity with which preachers disapproved of the rich attire of daughters rather than brides or married women can be taken as further evidence that this was everyday practice. For instance Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419) condemned women who dressed up their daughters instead of teaching them good manners.[98] Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) similarly exclaimed: 'When I think of your children, how much gold, how much silver, how many pearls, how much embroidery you have them wearing!'.[99] And by the end of the century Savonarola (1452-1498) especially called upon mothers to burn their daughters' finery: 'and you, mothers, who adorn your daughters with so many vanities and superfluities and hairstyles, bring them all here to throw them in the fire'.[100]

There are few sources that give exact details on jewellery worn by unmarried daughters, but the 1449 Pucci inventory indeed lists '1o frenello della Ginevra di perlle'.[101] Ginevra was Puccio Pucci's youngest daughter and was fourteen years old, unmarried and still living in her parental home at the time the inventory was compiled. In portraiture, unmarried girls wear jewellery as well, like Margherita Portinari, who is portrayed kneeling next to her mother on the Portinari altarpiece by Hugo van der Goes (fig. 31). The little girl wears a conspicuous necklace with a point-cut diamond pendant, two precious stones and a large pear-shaped pearl. Her French cap is adorned with a gold brooch with three pendant pearls. This jewellery is not, as Musacchio put it, 'seemingly inappropriate for her young age', but rather provides a faithful account of how even young girls were decked out.[102]

---

[95] Lydecker 1987, p. 134.
[96] 'Anchora che alle fanciulle non maritate non si intende per loro alcuna prohibitione che pe' presenti ordini si disopne, eccetto che non possino portare brocchati d'oro o d'ariento, se non quanto è permesso alle donne maritate, nè portare vestiri più lunghi, la coda, che le dette donne maritate.' Mazzi 1908, p. 46, no. 18.
[97] 'le fanciulle non maritate […] sia licito e possano portare ogni cosa et vestimento in dosso o in capo come vorranno'. Rainey 1985, app. 11, p. 771, no. 27.
[98] Muessig 2002, p. 245.
[99] 'Quando io pongo mente pure a' vostri fanciulli, quanto oro, quanto ariento, quante perle, quanti racami lo' fate portare!', Bernardino da Siena 1853, p. 267.
[100] 'E voi madri, che adornate le vostre figliuole con tante vanità en superfluità e capellature, portatele tutte qua a noi per mandarle al fuoco', Savonarola 1952, p. 130-131.
[101] Merkel 1897, p. 187, no. 44. Ginevra lived in the same *camera* as her mother and her brother Dionigio. The inventory lists many garments in their room, but often it is not clear to whom they belong. The only dress designated to be Ginevra's is '1a cioppa bigia co richamj, della Ginevra', worth 6 florins (no. 24).
[102] Musacchio 2008, p. 47. The Portinari triptych arrived in Florence in 1483, where it was installed in the Santa Maria Nuova, see: Nuttall 2004, p. 61.

A slightly later example, datable to c. 1485, of a young girl wearing jewellery is the portrait medal of the nine-year-old Ludovica Tornabuoni, who wears a beaded necklace and a pendant with three hanging pearls (fig. 32).[103] She was shown again wearing a pendant, this time in the frescoes adorning the family chapel in the church of Santa Maria Novella, painted between 1486 and 1490 (fig. 33). During that period, in 1489, Ludovica was betrothed to Alessandro Nasi. In her father's will, dated 26 March 1490, her dowry was settled at 3,000 gold florins. A list of the jewels she was to receive after the consummation of the marriage was also provided and included a 'croccettina' (little cross). After Ludovica's death, the jewels had to be returned to the Tornabuoni estate. According to Patricia Simons, this 'croccetina' is probably the pendant with which Ludovica was portrayed in the Tornabuoni chapel.[104] The cross shape, however, is difficult to distinguish, since the basic outline of the pendant is an oval encircled with pearls. Nevertheless, Simons was right not to characterize Ludovica, who was betrothed but still unmarried at the time, as a bride, but rather 'as a Tornabuoni woman, wearing [on her dress] their emblem and wealth'.[105]

Besides the exemption of unmarried girls, the sumptuary laws of 1449 and 1464 also granted more liberty to the wives of knights and doctors. In 1464 the law stated: 'Furthermore knights, doctors, both in civil and canon law and medicine, and foreigners, and their wives are allowed to wear anything they want'.[106] Clarice Orsini, who was of noble birth and married Lorenzo de' Medici in 1469, would certainly have been exempted from the sumptuary laws. A list of the dresses and jewellery she took with her on a trip to Rome in 1472 still exists. It is an impressive enumeration of many precious items, among which were various girdles with Medici devices, a necklace with forty-six large pearls and a pear-shaped pearl pendant, a gold necklace with a cross with five diamonds and three pearls, a shoulder brooch with a ruby, a table-cut diamond and two large pearls, another shoulder brooch with a table-cut balas ruby and many more jewels, pearls, gems and silver tableware.[107] In this case, the necklaces and shoulder brooches were certainly not meant to designate Clarice as a bride. The precious jewellery underlined the elevated status of the Medici, as is confirmed by the presence of Medici devices on the girdles.

Nannina de' Medici was given the opportunity to dress up after her marriage as well. In June 1468 she bore her husband a son, another event requiring costly gifts. Her father-in-law Giovanni Ruccellai noted everything she received, as he had done previously during the wedding. The new mother was given sixteen *braccia* of crimson satin for a *cotta* and one-and-a-half *braccia* of purple gold brocaded damask to make the sleeves. From various family members Nannina further received several pieces of silver tableware filled with sweets, a piece of white camlet (*ciambellotto*), an unspecified length of pink wool for a *gamurra*, six *braccia* of pile-on-pile

---

[103] Ludovica's age is known because a second cast, preserved in the Berlin Müntzkabinett, is inscribed 'AN VIIII'. See: Washington 2001, p. 127-129, cat. 10.
[104] Simons 1985, vol. 1, p. 139; repeated in: Simons 1988, p. 9-10 and most recently Simons 2011-12, p. 126. The will of Ludovica's father, Giovanni Tornabuoni, is published in: Cadogan 2000, p. 369-372. Alessandro Nasi signed for the receipt of the dowry in 1493. Eleonora Luciano argued that the portrait medal is an earlier portrayal of the same *crocettina*, even though it is obviously less rich, see: Washington 2001, p. 127.
[105] Simons 1988, p. 9.
[106] 'Anchora cavalieri, dottori, così in ragione civile come in ragione canonicha, et medicina, et huomini forestieri et loro donne, sia lecito portare tutte le cose che a loro parrà.', Mazzi 1908, p. 46, no. 19. For the exemptions in the 1449 law, see: Rainey 1985, app. 11, p. 771, no. 27.
[107] Published in Florence 2003, p. 178-179.

velvet to dress the baby, and sixteen *braccia* of *alessandrino* (deep blue) satin for a second *cotta*.[108] These gifts reflect common Florentine practice.[109]

Another example of dressing up after marriage can be found in the letters of Alessandra Macinghi. In May 1469 she wrote to her son Filippo Strozzi, who was in Naples for business. His wife, Fiammetta Adimari, had received an invitation for the wedding of Lorenzo de' Medici and Clarice Orsini. At first they declined, because Fiammetta was pregnant and might be giving birth around the time of the festivities. However, the baby was born well in time before the wedding was to take place and the invitation to Fiammetta was renewed. Although the young mother did not feel like going, Alessandra realized they could not decline the Medici. In her letter, she expressed her worries about the cost for Fiammetta's dress:

> if she does go we will have to spend several hundred florins. I must tell you that they are having a lot of brocade *robe* and *cotte* made, and we would have to have them made for her as well, and she does not have much jewellery. So now you know; let me know what you think. They have invited her for the fourth of June but they say it will go on till St. John's Day [24 June], which is a long time to provide enough clothes for her.[110]

We learn that Fiammetta indeed attended the wedding from a description of the festivities, probably written for Filippo by Marco Parenti, their brother-in-law, who describes the wedding procession, in which participated: 'thirty girls and young women, among whom was your Fiammetta'.[111] When mass was celebrated on the last day, all the guests would have been wearing their most beautiful garments. After a description of the precious jewels worn by some of the male guests, Marco Parenti continues: 'Not to mention the women: so many *cotte* and *giornee* of brocaded silk embroidered with pearls and quite a lot for each for them'.[112] Again Lo Scheggia's depiction of the Adimari-Ricasoli wedding may serve as an example of the extravagant dress, not only of the bride, but also of the numerous guests (fig. 29).

Expenditure on weddings other than one's own, as in this example, is less likely to be found in *ricordanze*, because it did not contribute directly to the honour of one's own family, nor was there a legal necessity to note these expenses. When a wider range of sources is consulted, it becomes clear that dressing up was not limited to brides, especially among the wealthiest levels of Florentine society. Both unmarried girls and married women could dress splendidly on a variety of occasions. Lavish dress should therefore not be strictly associated with marriage. This has implications for our understanding of the portraits under discussion here as well. Although these portraits show young women in their most representative dress and jewellery, it is not necessarily their wedding finery. On the other hand, the unidentified sitter without any jewellery

---

[108] Rucellai 1960, p. 35.
[109] For two more examples of gifts made to new mothers, see: Musacchio 1999, p. 46.
[110] 'che s'ella v'andassi, bisognerebbe espendere parecchi centinaia di fiorini. Avvisandoti che si fa assai robe e cotte di broccato; che così si richiederebbe fare ancora a lei: e poi delle gioie è mal fornita. Sì che tu ha' 'nteso: avvisa che ti pare. Envitorono pe' 4 dì di giugno; ma dicono che prolungheranno insino a San Giovanni: sicché ci è tempo assai, chi s'ha a vestire.' Alessandra Macinghi to Filippo Strozzi, Florence, 8 May 1465. Macinghi Strozzi 1997, p. 212-215 (translation: Heather Gregory).
[111] 'erano 30 fanciulle e giovane olto adorne fra lle quali era la Fiametta tua', Marco Parenti to Filippo Strozzi, undated sheet. Parenti 1996, p. 247. The wedding description was first published by Milanesi in 1870, who believed it was written by Marco's son Piero, see: Parenti 1870, p. 7. However, Marrese ascribed the sheet to Marco and concluded it must have been added to one of his letters to Filippo, see: Parenti 1996, p. XXXI.
[112] 'Delle donne non ti dico nulla: tante cotte e giornee di broccato di seta ricamate di perle e parecchi per ciascuna', Marco Parenti to Filippo Strozzi, undated sheet. Parenti 1996, p. 250.

in Pollaiuolo's Berlin portrait is not necessarily an unmarried girl, as Alison Wright thought her to be (fig. 24).[113] Marriage may have been an occasion to order a portrait, but there is no justification for labelling all portraits of women depicted wearing precious jewellery as wedding portraits, nor for regarding sitters without jewellery as unmarried girls.

4. Workshop practice

Although the garments and jewellery in portraits of women reflect the representative dress worn by the Florentine ruling class, caution is always required when discussing dress in painting. Randolph assumed a one-on-one relation of dress worn for a particular occasion and portraiture. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the painter added particular details to the dress or completely changed a sitter's attire. A patron, for instance, could have asked to have someone portrayed with sumptuous jewels that he could not actually afford.[114] Again, it should be stressed that our knowledge of the practice of painting portraits in the fifteenth century is fragmentary.

Only one Florentine preparatory cartoon for a portrait of a woman has survived, probably because it was once thought to be by Leonardo (fig. 34).[115] It now remains anonymous and is dated to c. 1470-1480. The cartoon shows a woman in strict profile facing right. The contours have been pricked as have details in the coiffure, that are now faded. A *pentimento* at the chest can be regarded as an indication that the profile was done from life. Of the sitter's dress only the outline has been indicated, without any further decoration or pattern, and the complete absence of jewellery is also striking. It has been suggested that the artist did not find it necessary to dwell on such details at this early stage.[116] If it was indeed common to draw the sitter's facial features during a live sitting and to add details of dress and jewellery only afterwards, we may wonder how realistic the costume in these portraits is. Were sitters portrayed wearing their own dress or did the painter make something up, possibly on request of the sitter or patron?

Two female portraits from the Pollaiuolo workshop, currently in Florence and New York, indeed suggest the use of workshop props (figs. 26-27). Both sitters, whose features are clearly not identical, are shown with the exact same jewellery: a pearl necklace with a pendant consisting of a ruby with three suspended pearls, a brooch in the form of an angel and in their hair a *frenello* made up of many pearls and a head brooch. The re-use of the same pieces of jewellery was no exception in the Pollaiuolo workshop. In an altarpiece, originally for the San Miniato and now in the Uffizi, the brothers depicted the same gold chain with alternating blue and red stones twice, once as a collar worn by Saint Eustace and again as jewelled band around the hat at the feet of Saint James (fig. 35). The chain appears again in *Tobias and the Angel*, where Tobias is wearing the same jewelled hatband (fig. 36).[117]

---

[113] Wright 2005, p. 120.

[114] Dress in Renaissance painting is often believed to be exceptionally realistic. Elizabeth Birbari strongly promoted this view, stating that the renewed interest in depicting nature also led to a true-to-life depiction of dress. Birbari 1975, p. 3-5. See also the introduction of this thesis, p. 6. For a more critical view towards dress and accessories in portraiture, see: Campbell 1990, p. 139.

[115] The cartoon was part of the collection of Francesco Melzi, who inherited Leonardo's notes and many of his drawings after the artist's death. For the rejected attribution to Leonardo, see: Popham and Wilde 1949, p. 178, cat. 32.

[116] Neville Rowley in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 105-106.

[117] Florence 1977, p. 304-305, cat. 204; Wright 2005, p. 127, 453, note 166. Wright points out jewels were often lent to friends and family members and suggests the possibility that two girls were portrayed with borrowed jewellery. Because the practice of using the same jewel more than once appears in in the religious paintings of the Pollaiuolo as well, they are more likely to be workshop props.

Antonio del Pollaiuolo was originally trained and remained active as a goldsmith when he started to paint. He is known to have made exactly those types of precious accessories that we find in trousseaux and female portraiture. For instance in 1461 he delivered niello decorations and pierced silver for a woman's girdle to the wealthy merchant Cino Rinuccini. Another example is a gilded silver tassel that the patrician Lorenzo Morelli ordered in 1472 for his bride.[118] The Pollaiuolo brothers thus had costly ornaments at hand and naturally may have used them as workshop props. Another possibility that could explain the occurrence of the same jewel twice is the use of design drawings that may have circulated in the workshop. Although no fifteenth-century examples have survived, they must have been rather common.[119]

Many Florentine painters, including Verrocchio, Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, started their career as a goldsmith. An apprenticeship in a goldsmith's workshop would have provided future painters not only with a thorough knowledge of jewellery design, but also a thorough training in draughtsmanship. Rubin and Wright pointed out that this might explain the taste for the lifelike rendering of precious jewels and silk fabrics woven with gold in Florentine painting.[120] This careful representation of materials in portraiture reached its peak in the 1460s and 1470s, most notably in the work of the Pollaiuolo brothers.

Before that time, many painters used gold leaf to imitate fabrics brocaded with metal threads. Tempera alone was not suited to render the shine of these fabrics. An example is Lo Scheggia's *Portrait of a Woman* in Philadelphia, where the dots on the bodice creating a pattern are traces of the original mordant gilding, a technique of applying gold leaf on the painted surface with an adhesive (fig. 20). Because this was done after the painting was finished, it was especially suited for applying smaller decorations. Baldovinetti has used the same technique in the *Portrait of a Lady in Yellow*, where the dots in the sleeve were originally gilded as well (fig. 22). Lippi's way of imitating the brocaded sleeve in the Scolari double portrait with paint instead of actual gold was more modern, but not entirely realistic yet, since the pomegranate pattern does not follow the creases of the fabric (fig. 15). This might be an indication that the painter did not have the actual garment at his disposal as a model.[121]

From the 1460s onwards the lifelike depiction of luxury fabrics started to flourish. Beautiful examples are the anonymous *Portrait of a Lady in Red* and the portraits by the Pollaiuolo brothers (figs. 23-27). This development was greatly influenced by Flemish painting, in particular the use of oil paint, which permitted a closer imitation of glimmering jewellery and gold brocades. Paula Nuttall analysed the San Miniato altarpiece by the Pollaiuolo brothers, showing how they combined egg tempera with oil paint, creating a Northern effect both in colour and texture (fig. 35). However, their handling of the paint, which was applied thickly in one layer, differed from their Flemish counterparts and showed an unprecedented free handling of the new medium. Nuttall noted the use of the same technique in their portrait of a woman now in Milan (fig. 25). The Berlin portrait is painted more precisely and therefore resembles the Flemish examples more closely (fig. 24).[122]

It has sometimes been suggested that painters were involved in textile design, which would explain their knowledge of the intricate patterns. However, Lisa Monnas has shown this

---

[118] Wright 2005, p. 12, 55. Cino Rinuccini listed the purchase in his *ricordanze*, published in: Rinuccini 1840, p. 251.
[119] For several examples of sixteenth-century jewellery designs, see: Florence 2003, p. 96-97, cats. 31-33; p. 111, cat 52.
[120] Rubin and Wright 1999, p. 79, 86.
[121] For a more in-depth discussion of the depiction of foreshortened gold brocade patterns and the imitation of glittering gold thread, see: Martin and Bergeon 1997, p. 41-54; Duits 2008, p. 49-56.
[122] Nuttall 2004, p. 174-176 (San Miniato altarpiece), p. 212, 288, note 87 (portraits).

was not the case. Drawings of textile motifs such as the famous examples by Pisanello that were previously regarded as designs, are more likely to be studies for actual paintings (fig. 37). Painters lacked the technical knowledge of weaving that was required of a pattern designer. This explains why famous painters such as Botticelli or indeed the Pollaiuolo brothers made designs for tapestry and embroideries, but never for woven fabrics.[123] However, in a city with a thriving textile industry, luxury fabrics were never far away. For instance, Botticelli's younger brother Antonio was a *battiloro*, a craftsman who produced beaten gold strips needed for gold thread.[124] Trained as goldsmiths, many painters must have had similar connections.

The emphasis on the representation of dress and jewellery in Florentine female portraiture may have been influenced by the painter's interest in the depiction of these materials. According to David Alan Brown, they shared this preference with their patrons. He suggested that the Florentine audience especially admired the careful depiction of sumptuous fabrics, not only because of their intrinsic beauty and value or the skill of the painter, but also because the production of these fabrics played a crucial role in the prospering Florentine economy. Thus, they also appealed to civic pride.[125]

5. Family honour and virtuous display

This chapter began with a survey of the Florentine portraits of women before 1475 that have come down to us. Due to the lack of written evidence it is impossible to determine when and why these portraits were ordered. Of the thirteen portraits discussed here, only Lippi's Scolari double portrait offers clues for the identification of the sitters and the occasion for the commission (fig. 15). The prevailing hypothesis that most portraits of women were painted to commemorate a marriage cannot be sustained. *Ricordanze* list many purchases around the time of the marriage, such as dress, furniture, painted wainscoting panels (*spalliere*) and devotional paintings, but portraits are never mentioned.[126] More importantly, this chapter has shown that costly dress and jewellery do not denote marriage per se.

Although the sitters remain unidentified and the occasions for their portrayal unknown, it is possible to say something about the function of portraits in fifteenth-century Florence. Alison Wright has convincingly argued that commemoration was the main purpose of portraits. She drew attention to the ancient source on portraiture that was most popular in the fifteenth century, the Roman writer Pliny the Elder.[127] Pliny described how in the old days people would put up portraits of their ancestors. Regretting the loss of this tradition, he explained:

> The painting of portraits, used to transmit through the ages the extremely correct likenesses of persons, has entirely gone out. […] In the halls of our ancestors it was otherwise; portraits were the objects displayed to be looked at, not statues by foreign artists, nor bronzes nor marbles, but wax models of faces were set out each on a separate side-board, to furnish likenesses to be carried in procession at a funeral in the clan, and always when some member of it passed away the entire company of his house that had ever

[123] Monnas 1987, p. 416-424; Monnas 2009, p. 49-53. As a court artist, Pisanello must have had ample opportunity to study expensive dress and textiles. Besides drawings of fabrics, several sheets with costume studies by Pisanello are still extant, see: London 2001, p. 70-74.
[124] Antonio Botticelli also produced gold leaf for painters. See: Cecchi 2008, p. 18-19.
[125] Brown 1998, p. 12-14. A similar point is made by Wright 2005, p. 122.
[126] On the patterns of acquisition around the time of marriage, see: Lydecker 1987, p. 145-165.
[127] On Pliny, family memory and portraiture, see: Wright 2000, p. 88.

existed was present. The pedigrees too were traced in a spread of lines running near the several painted portraits.[128]

Pliny regarded this practice as an excellent way to commemorate one's achievements and lineage. For the Florentine elite, portraiture fulfilled a similar function. Wright characterized Quattrocento Florentine portraits as an expression of family honour and the *virtus* of the sitter. Portraits might therefore have served as a stimulus for good conduct and fulfilled an exemplary function.[129] Might the dress represented in these portraits be related to this function?

As we have seen, portraits were probably still rare in Florence in the mid-fifteenth century and the few references in documents all relate to families from the highest level of society. The sumptuous dress of the female sitters is yet another indication of their status. Like the references to portraiture, the sources on dress discussed in this chapter concern families such as the Castellani, Rinieri, Parenti, Rinuccini, Rucellai, Strozzi and the Medici that all belonged to the ruling class.[130] The early Florentine portraits of women show the precious textiles, pearls and jewellery that only they could afford, even if the painters occasionally used workshop props or more costly textiles than a sitter truly owned.

The lush voided velvet of the bodice and gold-brocaded sleeves shown in the *Portrait of a Lady in Red* is an example (fig. 23). The dress worn by the sitter of the Pollaiuolo brothers' portrait in Berlin is of comparable richness (fig. 24). She wears a combination of a coloured silk *giornea* with a crimson gold-brocaded *cotta* underneath. Similar velvet garments are found in inventories of Medici women. From her husband, Nannina de' Medici received an overgarment of 'voided pile-on-pile velvet, with very rich fur and of a nice colour' (app. 3C). Lucrezia Tornabuoni, wife of Piero de' Medici, owned several velvet garments, often with a lining or sleeves of gold brocade (app. 3A, nos. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7). Even to the standards of the ruling class, these garments were exceptionally rich and therefore must have been a sign of truly high standing. In 1449, Lena, the wife of Antonio Pucci, had only one '*cotta* of voided red velvet on a white ground with little flowers', appraised at 25 florins.[131] More common were *cotte* and *gamurre* with brocaded sleeves, like the 'cotta of crimson damask with embroidered and brocaded sleeves of crimson damask' of Bartolomea Dietsalvi (app. 3B, no. 2). This type of sleeve figures in portraiture as well, for instance in the *Young Lady of Fashion* and Lo Scheggia's *Portrait of Lady* (figs. 19-20).

One portrait, Badovinetti's *Lady in Yellow*, even shows the sitter with a sleeve bearing a family emblem (fig. 22). Unfortunately, the emblem with three palm leaves and a feather on either side has never been convincingly identified. It is striking to find a portrait with such a device in Florence, because the use of family emblems is associated with courtly society rather

---

[128] 'Imaginem quidem picture, qua maxime similes in aevum propagabantur figurae, in totum exolevit. […] aliter apud maiores in atriis haec errant, quae spectarentur; non signa externorum artificium nec aera aut marmora: expressi cera vultus singulis disponebantur armariis, ut essent imagines, quae comitarentur gentilicitia funera, semperque defuncto aliquot totus aderat familiae eius qui umquam fuerat populous. Stemmata vero lineis discurrebant ad imagines pictas.' Plinius 1995, p. 262-265, book XXXV, II, 4 and 6.

[129] Wright 2000, p. 88. On the portraits as exemplum, compare also: Simons 1995, p. 270-271.

[130] In his study on fifteenth-century marriage alliances, Molho made a meticulous analysis of the Florentine ruling class, taking into account social, economic and political factors. He also included a list of families that belonged to this level of society, with an indication of their status. All of the families discussed here enjoyed high status. Molho 1994, p. 193-214 and appendix 3 'The Florentine Ruling Class', p. 365-410.

[131] '1a chotta di vellutato chermisj canpo biancho fiorini', Merkel 1897, p. 180, no. 1. Antonio Pucci was the eldest son in the household and he and his wife owned the most precious dress and jewellery of the household.

than republican Florence. However, it recalls the lavish embroidery on the sleeve of a *cioppa* ordered by Francesco Castellani, representing an eagle flying towards the sun, which may be a heraldic motif as well. Moreover, several pieces of a gold brocaded voided velvet with the Medici *palle* still survive (fig. 38).[132] Apparently, the Florentine ruling class adopted the aristocratic use of heraldic devices.

The amount of pearls shown in portraits, like those attributed to the Master of the Castello Nativity or Pollaiuolo's portraits in Milan, Florence and New York, is yet another indication of the wealth of the sitters (figs. 18-19, 25-27). These sitters all wear necklaces and hair ornaments with pearls of varying sizes. This calls to mind the gifts to his future wife Bartolomea that Bernardo Rinieri noted in his *ricordanze*.[133] In July 1458 he gave her a *frenello* with 274 pearls that cost more than 96 gold florins. In October he donated another 101 pearls for the same head ornament with a value of more than 37 florins (app. 3B, nos. 10-11). Over a time span of several months, he sent her many more ounces of small pearls to be used for embroidery and another, smaller *frenelluza* (app. 3B, nos. 12-17).[134] The richly embroidered cap of *The Lady in Red* is a beautiful example of the use of these seed pearls. Even the light veil worn over this cap is edged with small pearls. Bartolomea owned a comparable cap, described as a 'damask *berettina* trimmed with crimson and many pearls' (app. 3B, no. 32).

As these examples demonstrate, most portraits show the sumptuous dress and jewellery that we encounter in trousseaux and inventories of the leading Florentine families. Even the anonymous portrait now in the Metropolitan Museum that looks rather plain at first glance still shows two fashionable characteristics that were regarded as extravagant: dagged sleeves and pleats (fig. 17). Dagging was severely limited and pleating even prohibited all together in sumptuary law.[135] Early in the century, the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro had already expressed his approval of women wearing precious finery like gold and pearls. When Lorenzo de' Medici, the younger brother of Cosimo the Elder, married Ginevra Cavalcanti in 1416, Barbaro wrote a treatise on wifely duties as a wedding gift, entitled *De re uxoria*. On the subject of jewellery he wrote:

> Yet I think we ought to follow the custom – for good mores have so decayed – that our wives adorn themselves with gold, jewels, and pearls, if we can afford it. For such adornments are the sign of a wealthy, not a lascivious, woman and are taken as evidence of the wealth of the husband more than as a desire to impress wanton eyes.[136]

---

[132] Besides the two fragments in New York that are depicted here, other pieces are now in in the Art Institute in Chicago (made into a chasuble), the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Bargello in Florence, the Museo del Tessuto in Prato and the Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts in Brussels. See: New York 2008, p. 123, cat. 51.

[133] In his *ricordanze*, Cino Rinuccini recorded similar types of gifts, including large amounts of pearls and costly jewellery, for his future wife Ginevra d'Ugolino. See: Rinuccini 1840, p. 252-255.

[134] Seed pearls, probably meant for embroidery, are found in many more documents. For instance the 1449 Pucci inventory lists many more than 14 ounces of pearls with a value of 125 florins in the room of Antonio Pucci. Merkel 1897, p. 181, no. 22.

[135] Morelli 1881, p. 15 (law of 1439 banning dagging, except on the '*cholaretto*', or neckband). Rainey 1985, app. 11, p. 776, no. 5 (law of 1449 forbidding pleating), p. 768, no. 16 (law of 1449 limiting dagging); Bridgeman 1986, app. 1, p. 284 (law of 1459 prohibiting dagging).

[136] 'Illud tamen, quandoquidem eo delapsi mores sunt, ex consuetudine imitandum extimo, ut, si res nostra patiatur, auro, gemmis et margaritis apparentur. Talia enim magis abundantis, quam luxuriosae mulieris insignia, potius amplitudinem viri tuentu, quam procaces aucupentur oculos.' Barbaro 1915, p. 79, lines 19-23. Translation: Kohl and Witt 1978, p. 208. For an analysis of Barbaro's treatise, see: Frick 2004, p. 193-205.

It is obvious that in the first decades after the introduction of the genre in Florence portraits were exclusively being commissioned by the highest strata of society: the Florentine nobility and the richest merchants and bankers. Their dress is shown and their tastes are reflected in the surviving portraits. Dress in these portraits denotes status rather than marriage, in the form of material wealth, family jewellery and sometimes family emblems. This does not necessarily mean that the actual garments and accessories of the sitter were faithfully portrayed. As we have seen, painters may have used workshop props or design drawings, and they were familiar with luxury fabrics such as gold brocades. They employed these elements to create an image that conveys the status befitting the sitter's rank. Just like the honourable expenditure for family weddings was highlighted in *ricordanze*, portraits showcased the type of representative dress that directly contributed to family honour.

2. Dress in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci

In the mid-1470s, when Leonardo da Vinci was still an associate in Verrocchio's workshop, he painted the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci (1457-c. 1520), a Florentine banker's daughter (fig. 1).[1] Ginevra is portrayed in a three-quarter view in front of a juniper bush against a landscape backdrop. The juniper, *ginepro* in Italian, is a clear allusion to her first name.[2] The reverse of the panel is painted as well and shows a sprig of juniper encircled by a palm leaf and a laurel branch with a scroll reading 'VIRTUTEM FORMA DECORAT' (beauty adorns virtue) (fig. 2). At an unknown date, but certainly before 1780, a substantial portion of the panel was cut off at the bottom. Furthermore a strip of about one centimetre is missing on the right side. Apart from these trimmings and some paint loss in the area of the sitter's nose, it is well preserved for a painting of its age.[3] The portrait may originally have included Ginevra's hands. If so, Leonardo was indebted to Verrocchio, as he was the first sculptor to include a sitter's hands in a sculpted bust (fig. 39).[4]

The *Libro di Antonio Billi*, an early sixteenth-century manuscript of artists' biographies, is the earliest source that mentions the painting. Leonardo is praised in rather clichéd phrases for the lifelikeness of the portrait: 'He [Leonardo] painted Ginevra d'Amerigo Bencio with such perfection that it was none other than she'.[5] The anonymous author remains silent on the portrait's innovative character. Not only is Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* one of the first known Florentine female likenesses in a three-quarter view, the landscape in the background was a new feature in Florentine portraiture as well. Both innovations have received a great deal of attention in the literature and are associated with Flemish portraiture and, in the case of the three-quarter view, sculpture.[6]

Less studied than the portrait formula, but no less groundbreaking in Florentine portraiture, is Ginevra's attire, for she is dressed very modestly, in a plain brown garment, without jewellery. Her breast is covered with a light veil that is partly hidden under a black scarf,

---

[1] Wilhelm Bode was the first to attribute it to Leonardo on stylistic grounds. He recognized the sitter's costume as Florentine and was therefore able to reject an earlier attribution of the portrait to Leonardo's Milanese pupil Boltraffio. See: Bode 1882, p. 260-261. Bode's attribution has not been doubted since, the only exception being: Carnesecchi 1909, p. 292-293.

[2] First stated by: Bode 1903, p. 274-276.

[3] A 4.4 cm strip was added to the bottom of the panel. This strip is now covered by the rebate of the frame, but is visible on archival photographs of the portrait. An inventory of 1780 contains the oldest record of the painting's measurements, showing that the panel had already been cut down at that time. See: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 357. For a more extensive technical description, see: Gibson 1991, p. 161-165 (with ample photographic documentation); Bull 1992, p. 72-76; Walmsley 2013, p. 55-77; Walmsley 2014, p. 56-71.

[4] Leonardo's study of two hands of a woman, now in the Royal Collection (inv. no. RL 12558), is often associated with the portrait, see: Brown 1998, p. 106. Recently, however, the drawing was convincingly dated to c. 1489-1490, which rules out any connection with Ginevra's portrait. For the new dating, see: London 2011, p. 114. As Garrard has noted, it should be borne in mind that the portrait did not necessarily include hands. She proposes a reconstruction with the sitter behind a parapet, a formula observed in other fifteenth-century portraits, including Leonardo's *Belle Ferronnière* (fig. 4). Garrard 2006, p. 34.

[5] 'Ritrasse la Ginevra di Amerigho Benci tanto bene finita, che ella propria non era altrimenti.' Fabriczy 1891, p. 331. Translation: Walker 1967, p. 8.

[6] For a discussion of the impact of Northern portraiture, see the section entitled 'Flemish origins, p. 52-53. The influence of sculpture will be discussed in the section entitled 'Sculpting fashion', p. 54-56.

and on her head she wears a simple linen cap. A gold fringe along the neckline of the dress and a few little golden eyelets to lace up the bodice are the only decoration. This humble dress stands in sharp contrast to the way Leonardo's Florentine contemporaries dressed, or rather dressed up, their sitters. The Pollaiuolo brothers are a case in point. Their portraits from the 1470s show women dressed in garments with sleeves of gold brocade and conspicuous jewellery (figs. 26-27). This chapter seeks an answer to the question why Leonardo portrayed Ginevra so differently. It explores the possible sources for the depiction of plain dress, as well as the meaning of this choice within the Florentine art discourse of the time.[7]

1. The sitter and the patron

Ginevra de' Benci was born into a wealthy family with close connections to the Medici. Her grandfather, Giovanni d'Amerigo de' Benci (1394-1455), served as the general manager of the Medici bank from 1435 until his death and was an important patron of the arts. Ginevra's father, Amerigo di Giovanni de' Benci (after 1431-1468), worked for the Medici bank as well, managing the office in Geneva, and was acquainted with the members of the Neo-Platonist Academy. [8] As a girl Ginevra spent several years at the convent of Le Murate in Florence as part of her education, before marrying Luigi di Bernardo Niccolini (1442-1505) on 15 January 1474.[9] Luigi owned a cloth weaving business, which was not very prosperous. However, his family played an important role in Florentine politics and in 1478 Luigi became *gonfaloniere* followed by his appointment as *priore* in 1480.[10]

Further records about Ginevra's life are scarce. In a tax declaration of 1480 her husband Luigi complained he had 'more debts than goods' and that his wife had been ill and in need of the care of doctors for a long a time already. This statement should probably not be taken at face value, since Niccolini's complaints were certainly aimed at obtaining a tax reduction.[11] Furthermore, there is a letter to Ginevra written by an unidentified lute player, signed 'G+H', who lived in Rome at the papal court. This letter informs us that Ginevra was engaged in writing poetry. The lute player wrote that he had told the Roman ladies about the virtues of Florentine women, and especially those of Ginevra herself. In the same letter he begged her to send him a *sestina* she had written, of which he was only able to remember the first line: 'I ask your forgiveness and I am a mountain tiger'.[12] Apart from this single line from a second hand, no poetry by Ginevra is known to have survived.

Although Leonardo's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci is one of the few fifteenth-century female likenesses from Florence with an identified sitter, the identity of the patron and the

---

[7] The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a female portrait, attributed to Lorenzo di Credi (inv. no. 43.86.5), which is sometimes identified as Ginevra as well, on the basis of a sixteenth-century inscription on the reverse. The painting is in a bad state of preservation, the painted surface being severely abraded throughout. The dress has been altered and there are extensive losses of original paint in the clothing and the background. This is why the portrait is not discussed here. For the latest ideas on the dating and attribution, as well as technical research and the identification of the sitter, see: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 162-163, cat. 44, with references to earlier literature.

[8] Y. Renouard-E. Ragni in: DBI vol. 8 (1966), s.v. 'Benci, Amerigo', p. 182-183; Walker 1967, p. 1-2.

[9] After her death Ginevra was buried at Le Murate, vested in a nun's habit. On Ginevra's connection with the monastery, see: Holmes 2000, p. 129.

[10] Möller 1937-38, p. 197-198; Walker 1967, p. 2.

[11] 'più debito che mobile', Carnesecchi 1909, p. 284. The first to doubt Niccolini's words was Ada Alessandrini in: DBI vol. 8 (1966), s.v. 'Benci, Ginevra', p. 193. Niccolini's quote has often been interpreted literally, see for instance: Walker 1967, p. 2, 6.

[12] 'Chieggio merzede e sono alpestro tygre', 'G+H' to Ginevra de' Benci, Rome, 12-17 August 1490. The letter was first published by: Carnesecchi 1909, p. 293-296; re-published with an English translation in: Walker 1967, app. II, p. 24-27.

occasion of the commission have aroused much debate. The date of the portrait is obviously closely connected to the occasion. Kenneth Clark suggested the portrait was painted to celebrate Ginevra's marriage in 1474, a date that he considered to be consistent with the style of the picture.[13] This hypothesis has been often repeated and many art historians still adhere to this date on stylistic grounds, in particular because of similarities with the *Annunciation* in the Uffizi (fig. 9).[14] However, it should be borne in mind that the chronology of Leonardo's early work has not been established with certainty. For instance, the proposed dates for the Uffizi *Annunciation* range from c. 1470 to c. 1478.[15] It is therefore impossible to pin down the date of the *Ginevra de' Benci* to one or two years precisely on the basis of stylistic evidence.

A breakthrough came in 1989, when Jennifer Fletcher was able to show that the device on the back of Ginevra's portrait actually belonged to the Venetian humanist Bernardo Bembo (1433-1519) (fig. 2). Bembo served as the Venetian ambassador to Florence in the years 1475-1476 and again from 1478 to 1480. He quickly developed personal contacts with the Medici circle, including intellectuals such as Cristoforo Landini, Alessandro Braccesi and Naldo Naldi. In 1475, following the example of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, Bembo adopted the courtly fashion of choosing a platonic beloved, namely the beautiful Ginevra de' Benci. The aforementioned poets Landini, Braccesi and Naldi dedicated one or more poems to the platonic love affair and Ginevra herself was also the subject of two sonnets by Lorenzo de' Medici.[16] Fletcher suggested that Bembo commissioned the portrait during his second Florentine stay, but there seems to be no reason why he could not have ordered it during his first sojourn.[17] He may have met Leonardo in the circle of the Medici, who regularly commissioned works from Verrocchio, or through Ginevra's brother Giovanni.[18] It seems that Leonardo did indeed maintain a friendship with Giovanni, who had presented him with a map of the world and several books. Furthermore, according to Vasari Giovanni's son and heir, Amerigo, owned Leonardo's unfinished *Adoration of the Magi*.[19]

Bembo's device, consisting of the laurel and palm wreath with the text 'VIRTUS ET HONOR' (virtue and honour) can be found in several of his manuscripts, including the *Bemicae peregrinae*, and was also used on the tomb of Dante that he commissioned in 1483 (fig. 40).[20] An infrared image of the panel, published in 1998, after Fletcher wrote about the portrait in 1989,

---

[13] Clark 1939, p. 16. Others who connect the picture with Ginevra's marriage are: Kemp 1981, p. 51; Marani 1999, p. 48.

[14] Brown saw a close stylistic resemblance with the *Annunciation* (Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. no. 1618, dated c. 1473-1475) and argued that the wrinkling of the oil paint, due to Leonardo's lack of experience with the medium, and the dependency on Verrocchio point to a date early in the 1470s, see: Brown 1998, p. 105. Marani put *Ginevra de' Benci* even before the *Annunciation* and the *Madonna of the Carnation*, because he thought the landscape in the portrait lacks the atmospheric quality seen in these religious works, see: Marani 1999, p. 38, 46. Larry Feinberg, on the contrary, recently dated the portrait to c. 1478-1480, claiming there is stylistic evidence, which, however, he fails to specify. Feinberg 2011, p. 105.

[15] For an overview of the proposed dates, see: Zöllner 2003a, p. 216, no. V.

[16] On Bernardo Bembo's Florentine stay, see: Walker 1967, p. 2-5. For the poems, see: Walker 1967, p. 28-38, app. III-V; Naldius 1943, p. 39, no. 121. It not known when the poems were written. On the basis of internal evidence, Walker tends to date them to c. 1478-1480.

[17] Fletcher referred to Heydenreich, who dated the portrait to 1478-1480 on stylistic grounds. However, as stated earlier, dating the painting on the basis of stylistic evidence is problematical.

[18] Fletcher 1989, p. 811-815. For an overview of all manuscripts in Bembo's collection that bear either the motto or the device, or both, see part B of the appendix in: Garrard 2006, p. 55-56.

[19] Cecchi 2003, p. 129-131. For Giovanni's map and book in Leonardo's possession, see: Richter nos. 1416, 1444 and 1454. For the location of the *Adoration of the Magi*, now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, in Vasari's days, see: Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 24.

[20] For an overview of all manuscripts in Bembo's collection that bear either the motto or the device, or both, see: Garrard 2006, app. B, p. 55-56.

revealed an earlier motto under the presently visible 'VIRTUTEM FORMA DECORAT' (beauty adorns virtue), which reads 'VIRTU HONOR' (fig. 41). This confirmed the connection between Bembo and Ginevra's portrait once more.[21] It is impossible to determine how much time elapsed before the motto was altered, but it is certain that the first motto was a fully-fledged painted version, since the X-radiograph shows the background was painted around the letters.[22]

Even though the device on the portrait's reverse unmistakeably points to Bembo as the patron, both David Alan Brown and Mary Garrard argued otherwise. Brown proposed the somewhat hybrid solution that the front was ordered by Ginevra's relatives on the occasion of her betrothal in 1473, and the reverse only painted after Bembo's arrival in Florence.[23] He opted for a betrothal rather than a wedding portrait, for according to him in marriage portraiture the bride is usually depicted lavishly dressed in profile view, facing her husband to the left. Since her father had died in 1468, the painting could have been commissioned by Ginevra's brother, Giovanni.[24]

Mary Garrard rightly commented that it is unlikely that the front and back of the panel were painted at different times.[25] The altogether different scenario that she proposed, in which Ginevra herself might have played an active role in the realization of her portrait, seems equally unlikely though. She argues that the device on the reverse is not Bembo's, but Ginevra's own. On the basis of the aforementioned single line of poetry that has come down to us second-hand, Garrard sees Ginevra as a 'poet', whose honour and virtue are symbolized by laurel, a common emblem for poets, and palm. The portrait would have been commissioned around the time of her marriage by one of Ginevra's male relatives, not as a celebration of this marriage, but in honour of her presumed literary capacities. Bembo then would have adopted Ginevra's device, which is confirmed, according to Garrard, by the fact that it appears in his manuscripts only after his stay in Florence.[26] This is unlikely however, for Florentine women do not seem to have carried devices of their own, a practice that was limited to women of the court such as Isabella d'Este.[27]

Reviewing the evidence, it is almost certain that Bernardo Bembo commissioned the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci during one of his Florentine stays. His involvement explains the device on the verso in more than one way. Not only is it likely to be his own, the portrait with a device on its reverse was a well-known type in Venice, whereas there are no precedents in Florence.[28] The year in which Ginevra became Bembo's platonic beloved, 1475, sets a clear

---

[21] The infrared image was first published in: Brown 1998, p. 119. The image is actually a diagram composed of several infrared reflectograms in which brightness and contrast have been adjusted to enhance the individual letters. See: Walmsley 2013, p. 77.

[22] I am grateful to Elizabeth Walmsley for patiently answering all my technical questions about the two motto's via e-mail correspondence on 21 June 2014.

[23] Brown 1998, p. 119. Frank Zöllner reasoned the other way around, hypothesizing Bembo ordered his own portrait from a Venetian artist, which he brought to Florence after completion of the reverse. There he supposedly changed his mind and had Ginevra portrayed instead. Zöllner 2003b, p. 160-161.

[24] Brown 1998, p. 105-106.

[25] The idea was confirmed to her by the conservator of the National Gallery, David Bull. See: Garrard 2006, p. 28 and esp. p. 48 note 19.

[26] Garrard 2006, p. 29-30, 37-38. In an earlier article, written while still under the assumption that the portrait was painted in the late 1470s, the author introduced a similar argument, see: Garrard 1992, p. 59-64.

[27] On the devices used by Isabella d'Este, see: Praz 1981, p. 65-66.

[28] Parallels can be found especially in the portraits of Jacometto Veneziano. See: Brown 1998, p. 105 and esp. p. 206 note 89. On the relationship between Bernardo Bembo and Jacometto, see: Bolzoni 2010, p. 331.

terminus post quem. Since Bembo could have ordered the portrait during either his first or his second Florentine sojourn, the *Ginevra de' Benci* should be dated to c. 1475-1480.

2.1. Recognizing austerity

Although Ginevra's dress has not yet been studied thoroughly, several scholars have attempted to link her humble attire to a specific period of her life. The dull brown fabric of Ginevra's dress reminded Emil Möller of mourning garb, if it weren't for the gold trimming at the neckline.[29] For others, the absence of jewellery and lavish dress was a reason to reject the possibility that the work is a wedding portrait. Garrard thus dated the commission of the painting just before Ginevra's marriage, whereas Zöllner and Feinberg proposed it was painted on the instigation of Bembo several years after the marriage.[30] Either way, the argument is difficult to sustain, since luxurious dress and jewellery do not necessarily indicate a marriage, as has been explained in the previous chapter.

More importantly, a closer look at the development of Florentine female portraiture reveals that there was a shift from elaborate dress and jewels towards a general austerity, starting around the time of Ginevra's portrait. As discussed in the previous chapter, up to the 1470s the vast majority of the surviving female portraits show sumptuous costumes that are often made of gold brocaded fabrics or figured velvet, and precious jewels. The profile portraits from the Pollaiuolo workshop painted in the 1470s exemplify this type (figs. 26-27). Some painters, however, portrayed their subjects in a different manner. Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* is one example, the portrait of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, attributed to Ghirlandaio and now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, is another (fig. 42). A third one is Botticelli's *Portrait of a Lady* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, formerly identified as Smeralda Bandinelli, which will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis (fig. 43).[31] All three sitters are portrayed in three-quarter view, without the lavish finery usually seen in female portraiture.

Mary Garrard suggested that Ghirlandaio's portrait of Lucrezia Tornabuoni may have been a precedent for that of Ginevra de' Benci, as both depict an intellectually renowned woman dabbling in poetry in three-quarter view.[32] It is impossible though to determine whether Lucrezia's portrait was indeed painted before Ginevra's. Two portraits of Lucrezia Tornabuoni are known through archival references, an exceptional situation for a period in which the identity of sitters was rarely mentioned. The Medici inventory of 1492 lists 'a panel painting with the face of Madonna Lucrezia'. The second portrait can be found in the household inventory of Lucrezia's brother Giovanni Tornabuoni: 'a painting of the head and bust of Mona Lucrezia de' Medici'.[33] Ghirlandaio's panel in Washington is thought to be one of these two portraits, on the

---

[29] Möller 1937-38, p. 185.

[30] Garrard 2006, p. 30; Zöllner 2003b, p. 162; Feinberg 2011, p. 105-106. Garrard regards David Alan Brown as the art historian who 'perhaps best expounded the marriage thesis'. Brown, however, explicitly states it is unlikely to be a marriage portrait. He argues it was commissioned by Ginevra's brother Giovanni to celebrate her betrothal. See: Brown 1998, p. 105-106.

[31] It should be noted that the dress of Botticelli's sitter is not as humble as Ginevra's or Lucrezia's, even though it is often described in the literature as 'simple' or 'meant to be worn at home', see: Washington 2001, p. 172; Schumacher 2009, p. 30. Because of the analogies with the costume depicted in the *Mona Lisa*, this portrait will be more extensively discussed in chapter 5, p. 149-150.

[32] Garrard 1992, p. 63.

[33] 'Uno quadro di legname, dipintovi la 'mpromta di madonna Lucrezia', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 124, fol. 60v. Translation: Stapleford 2013, p. 187; '1° quadretto d'una testa e busto di Mona Luchrezia de' Medicj', cited from: Lydecker 1987, p. 63, note 84. Theoretically, both inventories could refer to a portrait of the eldest daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, Lucrezia (1470-after 1550), but given

basis of an old, but not contemporary inscription on the back of the panel that reads 'LU…TIA TORNABUONI MEDICI' and on the physical resemblance to Lucrezia's likeness in the scene *The Birth of Saint John the Baptist* in the Tornabuoni chapel in the church of Santa Maria Novella.[34] On stylistic grounds and on the basis of the age of the sitter – she is shown as an elderly woman – the portrait is tentatively dated around 1475, several years after the death of Lucrezia's husband, Piero de' Medici, in 1469.[35]

The fact that Lucrezia was a widow at the time she was portrayed may account for her sedate dress and the complete absence of jewellery. Lucrezia wears a dark green overdress, laced up at the front, with black sleeves over a red undergarment and a white *camicia*. The neckline of the dress is edged with silver. A slightly transparent veil, fixed to the bodice with two golden pins, covers her shoulders. On her head she wears a veil with a black band on top of a white cap tied under the chin. Eleonora Luciano regarded this veil as a sign of mourning, comparing it to Ghirlandaio's fresco *The Funeral of Santa Fina* in San Gimigniano, where the saint's attendant wears a similar scarf with a black stripe at the funeral, whereas in the scene in which Saint Fina is still alive, this black band is absent (figs. 44-45).[36] It was indeed common to wear special veils for mourning. Examples can be found in the list of mourning clothes provided to various members of the Medici household after the death of Cosimo the Elder in 1464, including Lucrezia Tornabuoni herself. Cosimo's wife, Contessina de' Bardi, received 30 *braccia* of brown cloth, eight *veli* (veils) and two *sciugatoi*, pieces of linen that could be worn on the head. Lucrezia Tornabuoni, Cosimo's daughter-in-law, and her daughters and daughters-in-law all received 14 *braccia* of brown cloth, two veils and one *sciugatoio*.[37]

Lucrezia's staid dress stands in great contrast to her sumptuous wardrobe as recorded in the Medici inventory of 1456, when her husband was still alive (app. 3A). It was common, however, for a widow to dress humbly, as is confirmed by the posthumous inventory of Alessandra Macinghi, who had outlived her husband Matteo Strozzi (1397-1435) by many years when she died in 1471. Alessandra had six black *cioppe*, some of them already worn out, three *gamurre* of grey and black wool, one short, white dress (*gamurrino*), two black mantles, one again being worn out, and eight *camicie*. To cover her head, she had two *berette*, two *cuffie* and five *sciugatoi* at her disposal.[38] These garments and accessories are very similar to those worn by Lucrezia in her portrait.

Since the suggested dates of c. 1475 for Lucrezia's portrait and c. 1475-1480 for Ginevra overlap, it is impossible to determine whether one of the two portraits served as an

---

Lucrezia Tornabuoni's prominence it is generally assumed she is the person depicted. See Eleonora Luciano in: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 303.

[34] On this identification, the attribution to Ghirlandaio and the condition of the panel, see Eleonora Luciano in: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 303-307; Van der Sman 2010a, p. 47-48.

[35] Eleonora Luciano in: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 306. Only doubted by Jennifer Craven, who thought the portrait was based on Lucrezia's posthumous likeness in the Tornabuoni chapel in Santa Maria Novella, using the same cartoon, see: Craven 1997, p. 302-303, cat. 33. However, there is no evidence to support this claim.

[36] Eleonaro Luciano in: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 306.

[37] The complete list is published in: Gori 2001, app. VIII, p. 255-257. The number of *veli* and *sciugatoi* recorded here corresponds exactly to a sumptuary law concerning funerals that was issued almost a decade later, in 1473. This law allowed daughters to receive a length of cloth for a *mantello* and a *cioppa*, two *veli* and one *sciugatoio* after their father's death. Published in: Rainey 1985, app. 12, p. 776.

[38] According to Alessandra's last will, part of her clothing was donated to the nuns of Fuligno and Le Murate and the rest divided among family members and servants. A costly liturgical garment made of white damask brocaded with gold and embroidered with the coats of arms of the Strozzi and the Macinghi was given to the church of Santa Maria degli Ughi, next to the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. Published in: Macinghi Strozzi 1877, p. 610-611.

example for the other. Moreover, Garrard ignored Botticelli's female portrait, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which was also painted in the 1470s. Given the more or less simultaneous dates of the portraits, it seems equally likely that Leonardo, Botticelli and Ghirlandaio drew inspiration from a common source. In the case of Leonardo, there is no doubt that his choice for a three-quarter pose was motivated by Verrocchio's sculpted busts. Botticelli's portrait is often connected to Verrocchio's *Bust of Lady with Flowers* as well (fig. 39).[39] Although there is no evidence to suggest that Ghirlandaio was connected to Verrocchio's workshop, it is usually assumed he was influenced by the latter's elegant, sculptural style. Indeed, their styles are so alike that there is even a group of paintings of the Madonna that have been attributed alternately to Verrocchio and Ghirlandaio.[40] The evidence suggests that the changes that took place in the representation of women in the 1470s were all linked to the Verrocchio workshop.

In the 1480s the number of extant portraits of female sitters in humble dress rapidly increased. Besides Botticelli's famous female portraits dressed 'all' antica', two portraits in strict profile of very austerely dressed women from his hand survive, one in the Galleria Palatina and the other in a private collection (figs. 46-47).[41] The sitter of the Galleria Palatina portrait wears a thin black string around her neck, but no pendant is visible. Her *gamurra* is made of a dull brown fabric, similar to the cloth in the portrait of Ginevra. Her white *camicia* peeks out at the elbow, the shoulder and the centre of her bodice. The girl's back, which is partly exposed by the plunging neckline of the *gamurra*, has been modestly covered with a thin veil. Her hair is put up and tightly assembled under a white cap, with a lock of hair nearly escaping as a playful detail. The sitter of the second portrait is dressed in black, has a similar string around the neck and wears a transparent veil over her head.

Several other portraits of female sitters in plain dress dating from the 1480s are from the Ghirlandaio workshop. An unidentified portrait, now in Altenburg, shows a woman in three-quarter view wearing a plain blue *gamurra* without any jewellery (fig. 48). Two other portraits, both attributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio's brother Davide, show sitters that are dressed slightly less plainly. The sitter of the portrait now in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute wears a bright red dress, adorned with a black belt with a gold buckle. (fig. 49).[42] The sleeves of her *gamurra* consist of two parts that are laced together just below the elbow. Her chest is covered with a transparent veil and she wears a cross-shaped pendant with three dangling pearls. The other portrait ascribed to Davide is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 50). On the basis of the physical resemblance with one of the daughters of Francesco Sassetti who was portrayed by Ghirlandaio in the family chapel in the church of Santa Trinita, the sitter is sometimes identified as Selvaggia Sassetti (born 1470).[43] Wearing a gown that

---

[39] Most recently by Stefan Weppelman in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 112, cat. 14.

[40] Verrocchio's influence on Ghirlandaio is discussed by: Cadogan 2000, p. 24-27, see esp. p. 24 for the Madonna's.

[41] The suggested dates for the portrait in the Galleria Palatina in earlier literature range from c. 1475 to c. 1490, but a date of c. 1485 is now generally accepted. See: Paris 2003, p. 128, cat. 12; Casciu, Chiarini and Padovani 2003, vol. 2, p. 92-93, cat. 121; Frankurt am Main 2009, p. 184-186, cat. 14. The portrait that is now in a private collection is also placed in the 1480s, although there is still some discussion as to whether it should be dated to the first or the second half of the decade. See: Paris 2003, p. 120, cat. 10 (c. 1481-1482); Frankurt am Main 2009, p. 182, cat. 13 (second half 1480s).

[42] On the date and attribution, see Simona Di Nepi: London 2008, p. 146.

[43] On the attribution to Ghirlandaio and the identification of the sitter as Selvaggia, see Everett Fahy in: Budapest 2009, p. 182, cat. 30. Although Jean Cadogan acknowledged the great resemblance between the sitter of the Metropolitan panel portrait and the girl in the Sassetti chapel fresco, she rightly expressed her reservation regarding an identification based on physical appearance alone, see: Cadogan 2000, p. 279-280.

appears to be made of watered silk, decorated with golden eyelets, and a coral necklace with a sumptuous pendant, this is one of the more richly dressed sitters found in this decade. However, compared to the Pollaiuolo portraits of the 1470s, her attire is still fairly modest, as she is shown wearing only one piece of jewellery and no gold brocaded fabrics. Moreover, her chest is covered with a veil, as befitted a chaste woman, and at her right side a tiny piece of a white apron is visible, again a cheap and simple piece of clothing suitable for a virtuous girl.

Many portraits that were painted in the 1480s lack precious jewellery and patterned fabrics.[44] In fact, from c. 1480 onwards, female portraits with unadorned dress made of plain fabrics began to make up the vast majority. This trend is only rarely acknowledged in the literature and plain dress in portraiture is often seen as the exception to the rule.[45] Carol Frick, for instance, regards Botticelli's portrait of an unknown woman in the Galleria Palatina as a rare representation of indoor dress.[46] Furthermore, the interpretations offered are disparate and unsubstantiated. One proposed explanation is the supposed lower standing of the sitter. An example is the aforementioned portrait of a young woman in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, ascribed to Davide Ghirlandaio (fig. 49). The sitter has been previously identified either as a member of the Rucellai family or as Giovanna degli Albizzi, wife of Lorenzo Tornabuoni.[47] Simona Di Nepi dismisses both identifications, because she considers the sitter's dress to be too plain for a girl from an elite family.[48]

Moreover, there is no consensus regarding the identification of the young women depicted in the Sassetti chapel. Francesco Sassetti had no fewer than six daughters. Whereas Fahy identified the girl in question as fifteen-year-old Selvaggia, Rab Hatfield argued she could be her one-year-older sister Lisabetta (born 1469). See: Hatfield 1978, p. 231. Eve Borsook, on the other hand, opted for either Maddalena (born 1474) or Selvaggia, see: Borsook and Offerhaus 1981, p. 38-39.

[44] The portraits mentioned here are only a selection. Other examples from the Ghirlandaio workshop include, among others, the *Portrait of a Woman* now in the National Gallery in London (inv. no. NG1230) and the *Portrait of Constanza Caetani* in the same museum (inv. no. NG2490). Other painters also portrayed their sitters this way, for instance Lorenzo de Credi (*Portrait of a Woman with Jasmin Flowers*, Forlì, Pinacoteca; *Portrait of a Young Woman*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 43.86.5) and Raffaelino del Garbo (*Portrait of a Woman*, Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 44-554).

[45] Only two authors explicitly noted this change, the first being Patricia Simons. Although her research on Florentine female profile portraits has been very influential, her observation that female portraits from the 1470s onwards tend to follow male conventions, portraying plainly dressed women that are turned towards the viewer, has not received much attention, nor did she elaborate on it herself. Simons 1988, p. 8; republished: Simons 1992, p. 41. Jennifer Craven noted the shift as well and suggested a relation with Florentine sumptuary law. Craven 1997, p. 183-198.

[46] Frick 2002, p. 86.

[47] Wilhelm von Bode identified the sitter as a Rucellai girl in a comment written on the back of a photograph of the painting, dated 4 September 1913. For the photo, which is kept in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, see: Brown 2001, p. 23, note 29. Louis Gielly believed the sitter was Giovanna degli Albizzi, because the hairstyle and the jewel with the three pearls are very similar to Giovanna's portrait now in the Thyssen Collection, see: Gielly 1939, p. 195. Although the relatively plain dress is not a satisfactory argument for dismissing these identifications, there is not enough evidence to securely identify the sitter.

[48] Simona Di Nepi in: London 2008, p. 146. In his survey of Renaissance portraiture, Lorne Campbell argued similarly that the sitter of a portrait attributed to Pollaiuolo (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, inv. no. P16w7) 'not being richly dressed, was probably not of very elevated status'. Campbell 1990, p. 88. Quite another matter is that there is reason to treat this specific portrait with suspicion. Not only does it, quite unusually for a fifteenth-century painting, lack a gesso ground, but more importantly it was sold in 1874 by Stefano Bardini, the unscrupulous Florentine art dealer. Current research in Bardini's archives has already revealed that many of his pieces were forgeries or seriously damaged and overly restored fifteenth-century paintings. On the portrait's provenance and state of conservation, see: Wright 2005, p. 523, cat. 53. I thank Lynn Catterson for kindly sharing her view on this portrait with me and her attempt to trace it in the Bardini archive.

Discussing the sobriety of dress in Ginevra de' Benci's portrait, Mary Garrard went so far as to attribute 'proto-feminist' ideas to Ginevra (fig. 1). Arguing that not all women were 'victims', Garrard presents examples of women with a mind of their own. One of them is Laura Cereta (1469-1499), a female humanist from Brescia who actually pursued a scholarly career and promoted women's rights. In one of her letters, published in her *Epistolae familiares* in 1488, these purported feminist thoughts take the form of an attack on women who wear ostentatious dress. Cereta complains that women have too much appetite for display instead of seeking honour.[49] According to Garrard it is not too far-fetched a hypothesis that Ginevra's choice of humble attire was motivated by the same point of view.[50]

There is, however, no evidence whatsoever that Ginevra held such opinions. Frick has clearly shown that the process of buying and ordering clothes for women was a male business in Florence. Fathers provided their daughters with a wardrobe and husbands did the same for their wives.[51] Moreover, the origin of Cereta's concerns suggests they should not be taken too literally as a reaction to behaviour of real Brescian women. Her letter is profoundly influenced by Juvenal's sixth satire on women, from whom she explicitly borrowed her examples of female dressing up. These include typical ancient Roman ornaments, such as earrings, that were not worn in Italy in the fifteenth century.[52] Furthermore, in stark contradiction to Cereta's supposed feminist dress principles, in another letter she indulges in the description of an embroidered shawl that she had been working on for months.[53] This demonstrates that Cereta's attitude towards dress cannot be caught in a simple definition, let alone an anachronistic one as proposed by Garrard.

According to yet another hypothesis plainly dressed sitters are women who had been married for some time. Andreas Schumacher proposed this idea in connection with the Botticelli portraits mentioned above (figs. 46-47). He argues that these women were not represented as brides, but in their roles as wife and mother.[54] Alison Wright, however, suggested that Botticelli's 'simplification of dress and presentation', as she calls it, was influenced by religious reforms and social control exercised by preachers, especially Savonarola (1452-1498). This new atmosphere led to stricter regulation of displays of wealth and, Wright argues, a subsequent decline in the quantity of portraits painted, reflected by the relatively small number from the last decade of the century that have survived.[55] However, Savonarola's influence in Florence was only felt from 1490 onwards, when he was reassigned as lector at San Marco, whereas Botticelli's portraits of austerely dressed female sitters date to the mid-1480s. It is also striking to note that Wright does not regard Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* as one of these 'simplified' portraits. She clearly focuses on the setting and the portrait formula, for Ginevra's dress is as simple as that of Botticelli's sitters (fig. 1).

---

[49] Laura Cereta to Agostino Emilio, 12 February 1487. The entire letter is published in: Cereta 1997, p. 83-86. Garrard only quotes the paraphrased and summarized version of the letter, published in: Rabil Jr. 1981, p. 82-83, as if it were Cereta's original text.

[50] Garrard 2006, p. 46.

[51] Frick 2002, p. 78-79.

[52] On the influence of Juvenal, see: Rabil Jr. 1981, p. 82; Cereta 1997, p. 82-83.

[53] On Cereta's ambivalence towards dress and ornament, see: Cereta 1997, p. 12.

[54] Schumacher also points out that the austere appearance of Botticelli's sitters is in accordance with the stricter Florentine sumptuary law of 1472. Schumacher 2009, p. 29.

[55] Wright 2000, p. 104. According to Wright, it is no coincidence that Leonardo's important portraits from the 1480s were painted in Milan, where the court culture provided the appropriate background for an ambitious portrayal of women lacking in Florence at that moment. This view, however, does not take into account that Leonardo's portraits are strikingly different from the usual Milanese court portraits, a matter that is discussed in chapter 3.

Given the limited number of surviving portraits, one should be cautious in trying to distinguish trends in female portraiture. The extant portraits may not be reliably representative of the entire output of female portraits in that period. We cannot rule out the possibility that women were portrayed austerely dressed before c. 1475 or that more portraits were painted of sumptuously dressed ladies in the 1480s and 1490s. However, the chronological development of the extant Florentine female portraits suggests that the preference for lavish dress gradually faded from c. 1475 onwards. In any case, in the surviving portraits of the last quarter of the fifteenth century the majority of the sitters are wearing rather plain dress. Given these numbers, the absence of finery cannot be considered highly unusual. This means that the search for an answer to the question of why a woman was portrayed in plain dress should not be limited to an examination of the sitter's individual circumstances, such as how long she had been married or her familial status. There appears to have been a break with the pictorial tradition of sumptuously dressed female sitters, the cause of which may well be related to a change in the general view on the appropriate representation of women.

2.2. Ginevra's dress

Before considering various possible sources for this change in artistic representation, it is important to establish what exactly Ginevra is wearing and how these clothes would have been perceived at the time. Ginevra's brown dress is unanimously regarded as a *gamurra* (fig. 1). Her chest is covered with a nearly transparent veil, on top of which she is wearing a folded black band or shawl that has not been properly identified yet.[56] Ginevra's hair is parted in the middle, put up at the back of her head and covered by a little white bonnet. Abundant tight curls dangle freely on both sides of her face.

The *gamurra*, a relatively cheap undergown, was discussed briefly in the previous chapter. Patrizia Baldi recently conducted extensive archival research on the *gamurra*, which further refined the early twentieth-century conclusions of Polidori Calamandrei.[57] *Gamurre* were usually made of woollen cloth, *panno di lana*, but other fabrics were used as well, among them linen, *saia* and *rascia.* Green in a variety of shades was the most popular colour, followed by red and blue. Cheaper colours that also appear regularly are grey and reddish brown or *monachino*, of which Ginevra's *gamurra* is an example. Many of the examples that are recorded in inventories were adorned with multiple eyelets (*maglie* or *magliette*), buttons, ribbons or embroidery. The one worn by Ginevra is only modestly decorated with a narrow gold ribbon along the neckline and a number of golden eyelets with a blue ribbon laced through to close the bodice.[58]

On the basis of the visual evidence of portraiture, Levi Pisetzky assumed that usage of the *gamurre* was becoming more common in the last decades of the fifteenth century and Baldi indeed found more richly ornamented examples towards the middle of the century that were suitable for wearing on their own.[59] Among the upper class, however, it must have been fairly uncommon for a woman to appear in public wearing nothing more than a *gamurra*. Jane

---

[56] The black shawl was certainly planned from the start, for Leonardo applied the brown paint for the *gamurra* only up to the edges of the shawl, leaving the area for the accessory in reserve. Walmsley 2013, p. 64.

[57] Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 36; Baldi 2006, p. 283-298, with documentary appendix on p. 313-349.

[58] Craven erroneously thought the number of eyelets worn by Ginevra was a violation of the sumptuary law of 1472. Craven 1997, p. 193. However, this law allowed women to wear any number of eyelets, as long as they served a purpose and were not purely decorative: 'Et sia alle donne permesso havere alle loro vesti […] magle et bottoni solo per affibiare, et ghangheri et punte d'ariento biancho o dorato, o contrafacto, come voranno.' Mazzi 1908b, p. 49, no. 6.

[59] Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 233; Baldi 2006, p. 298.

Bridgeman characterized the garment as 'utilitarian' because of the small amount of fabric – about six or seven *braccia* – required to make one.[60] In inventories they are often listed together with *cioppe*, ample overgarments that only partly revealed the *gamurra* underneath through slits, mainly at the sleeves.[61] The combination of an undergown and an overgarment was considered far more representative than a *gamurra* alone.

The importance of dressing appropriately was already emphasized by Francesco Barbaro. In his *De re uxoria*, written in 1416 for Lorenzo de' Medici the Elder on the occasion of his marriage to Ginevra Cavalcanti, he expressed a humanist view on how a woman should dress herself:

> Wives ought to care more to avoid censure than to win applause in their splendid style of dress. If they are of noble birth, they should not wear mean and despicable clothes if their wealth permits otherwise. Attention must be given, we believe, to the condition of the matter, the place, the person, and the time; for who cannot, without laughing, look upon a priest who is dressed in a soldier's mantle or someone else girdled with a statesman's purple at a literary gathering or wearing a toga at a horse race. Hence, we approve neither someone who is too finely dressed nor someone who is too negligent in her attire, but, rather, we approve someone who has preserved decency in her dress.[62]

Barbaro propagated a balance between restraint and ostentation, while always considering the appropriateness for the occasion. A *gamurra*, especially a rather plain example as represented in Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*, would likely have been considered too plain, unless worn in the privacy of the domestic realm, where no visitors entered. In the *Libri della famiglia*, Alberti expressed a similar view: 'On great holidays a new garment, on other days clothing that has been worn. Very old clothing is only to be worn inside the house.'[63]

A century after Alberti, the ideas on dressing appropriately had not changed much. Alessandro Piccolomini published his *Dialogo de la bella creanza de le donne de lo stordito intornato* in 1540. Two women, Raffaela and Margarita, discuss among other matters the kind of dress a woman should wear. Margarita states that a woman should regularly change clothes and follow fashion, whereupon Raffaela adds that women's dress should be rich and becoming. When Margarita asks her to expound on this richness of dress, Raffaela provides the example of a *gamurra*, or *camorra* as it is spelled here, that is too simple:

> Well, I say that the richness of dress consists in taking the utmost care that the materials – woollens, fine silks or other fabrics – are the finest and best that one can find, because dressing in coarse cloths like, for instance, Madonna Lorenza, who had a dress [*camora*] made of cloth that was almost like a friar's, which is meagre attire.[64]

---

[60] Bridgeman 1986, p. 301. Bridgeman based the required length of fabric on the amounts specified in the *ricordanze* of the painter Neri di Bicci. See: Bicci 1976, p. 143, 150.
[61] Already stated in Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 44 and confirmed by Baldi 2006, p. 301.
[62] 'ut magis evitandae ignominiae, quam quaerendae gratiae causa splendoris hujus curam suscipiant. Nam quae clarissimo locae natae sunt, si fortunae suppetent, vili sordidaque veste uti non debent. Ad rei profecto, et loci, et personae, et temporis rationem haec maxime referri judicamus. Quis pontificem sago amictum, vel in litterario auditorio laticlavo succintum, vel in equestri certamine togatum, sine risu videre poterit? Attamen, nec nec nimis exquisitus, nec neglectus admodum vestitus a nobis probabitur, sed qui decorum servaverit.' Barbaro 1915, p. 77, lines 16-24. Translation: Kohl and Witt 1978, p. 206-207.
[63] 'In dí solenni la vesta nuova, gli altri dí la vesta usata, in casa la vesta più logora', Alberti 1969b, Book III, p. 247. Translation: Alberti 1969a, p. 194.
[64] 'Dico adunque che la ricchezza de le vesti consiste molto in cercar con diligenza che i drappi, panni, saie o altre tele sieno finissime e le migliori che trovar si possi; perché il vestirsi di panni grossi, come fa,

Margarita in turn replies that Lorenza's dress is not almost but exactly as coarse as a friar's tunic. Even though Piccolomini wrote his dialogue more than sixty years after Leonardo painted Ginevra's portrait, Raffaela's opinion about the inappropriateness of a plain, coarse *gamurra* is still relevant.

A rare example, almost contemporary to Ginevra's portrait, of an upper class girl appearing in a *gamurra* is provided by one of Alessandra Macinghi's letters. In 1465 Alessandra wrote from Florence to her son Filippo Strozzi in Naples, who needed a wife. Her son-in-law Marco Parenti had arranged a visit to his trusted friend Francesco Tanagli, whose daughter was a suitable candidate for marriage. Alessandra described the successful visit to Filippo:

> He [Francesco] wanted Marco to go with him to his house, and he called the girl down in her *gamurra*, and he [Marco] saw her, and he [Francesco] said that if Caterina or I wanted to see her at any time he would show her to us. Marco says she looks beautiful and that she seemed suitable to him.[65]

By telling Filippo that the girl was wearing a *gamurra*, Alessandra underlines the intimacy of the visit and Francesco's willingness to marry off his daughter, which is further confirmed by the offer to Filippo's sister Caterina and Alessandra herself to pay a visit as well. Moreover, without the concealing layer of an overgarment, Marco certainly could have judged the girl's beauty better.

Ginevra's white cap is as humble as her *gamurra*.[66] It shows some traces of a pattern formed by two parallel lines with a zigzag line in the middle. Ginevra's chest is covered with a veil, an accessory that is often found in inventories.[67] For example Bartolomea Dietisalvi and Nannina de' Medici both had several veils (*veletti*) (app. 3B, no. 50; app. 3C, no. 70). The city government attached considerable value to covering the chest. In 1464 women were obliged to wear a *coverciere*, a garment to cover the cleavage that is known as a partlet in English. This could be made of linen, silk, wool, gold or silver brocade, as long as it did not expose the flesh. This even applied to wives of noblemen and doctors, who were exempted from most other stipulations in the 1464 sumptuary law.[68] As we have seen, many portraits show women wearing a veil or partlet to cover their chests and backs, although there are also sitters who expose their nude skin, for example the two women who were portrayed by the Pollaiuolo brothers (figs. 26-27). Although Ginevra's veil is slightly transparent, the accessory is in accordance with the rest of her modest attire.

The black band around Ginevra's neck is less easy to identify. Two different suggestions have been put forward. According to Garrard, it is a scapular, a piece of cloth that descends to the knees and is worn as part of a monastic habit. Scapulars could be worn by tertiaries who lived outside the convent to express their ties with monastic life. Garrard assumed Ginevra adopted the black scapular that was part of the Benedictine habit of Le Murate just after leaving

---

poniam caso, madonna Lorenza, che per foggia ha fatto una camorra di panno poco manco che fratesco, si domanda foggia magra.' Di Benedetto 1970, p. 448.

[65] 'E volle che Marco andassi co lui a casa sua, e chiamò giù la fanciulla en gamurra: la vide; e profersegli che ogni volta ched io la volevo vedere, e così la Caterina, che ce la mosterrebbe. Dice Marco che'ell' ha bella persona, e parvegli che fussi ricipiente fanciulla' Alessandra Macinghi to Filippo Strozzi, Florence, 26 July 1465. Transcription and translation: Macinghi Strozzi 1997, p. 149-151.

[66] It is sometimes suggested that a cap or bonnet covering the hair is a sign that the woman represented is married, see for instance Paula Nutall on Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of a Woman* (fig. 48) in: Florence 2008, p. 180, cat. 40. However, there is no evidence to support this.

[67] Erroneously identified as Ginevra's *camicia* by: Möller 1937-38, p. 185.

[68] Mazzi 1908a, p. 46, nos. 16 and 19.

the convent for marriage.[69] Feinberg, however, connected the black scarf with the Neo-Platonist Academy. Since Cristoforo Landino is wearing a similar scarf in his portrait in the Tornabuoni chapel frescoes by Ghirlandaio, Feinberg suggested it is a sign of affiliation to the Academy (fig. 51).[70]

Both Garrard and Feinberg were apparently ignorant of a *spalliera* panel painted for the Pucci family by Botticelli on the occasion of Gianozzo di Antonio Pucci's marriage to Lucrezia di Piero Bini. It depicts a wedding banquet (fig. 52). Three of the female guests are wearing scarves similar to Ginevra's (fig. 1). The second woman from the left sitting at the table, sometimes identified as Sibilla Sassetti, is wearing a greenish yellow dress with a brown scarf whose ends are crossed at the chest. It does not run to the ankles like a scapular, but only reaches down to waist level. Her neighbour, the only woman looking the beholder directly in the eyes, has a black scarf and the fifth woman at the table is wearing a dark scarf on top of a blue dress.[71] Clearly, these wedding guests did not put scapulars around their necks, and it is unlikely they are wearing academic stoles.

The narrow scarf could, however, be a *collaretto*, a garment that appears in the sumptuary law of 1464. This law forbade most types of decorations on the *cioppa*, such as embroidery in gold or silver and pearls, but allowed women to have 'at the *collaretto* [neckband] […] a strip of fabric of any sort or colour, no longer than one *braccia* for a *cioppa*, and it cannot be of gold or silver brocade'.[72] The Medici inventory of 1492 provides further details on how *collaretti* were worn, mentioning 'twenty-seven *collaretti* for women to wear at the neck, in gauze'. Just as these examples, Ginevra's folded scarf appears to be of a supple fabric as well.. More *collaretti* are listed on the next folio of the Medici inventory: 'many ribbons and close-fitting *collaretti*'.[73] Besides the Medici inventory many other inventories and trousseaux list *collaretti* as well. For example, Maria di Piero Bini's trousseau included no less than '48 collaretti da cioppe'.[74] In 1472, the sumptuary law explicitly allowed wives and daughters of peasants to wear *collaretti*.[75] Ginevra's black scarf seems to have been a rather common accessory, owned by many women in large quantities. Again, it is an accessory that is in harmony with the overall austerity of her dress.

Ginevra is dressed modestly. Her garments and accessories were very common, but they were not regarded as appropriate for wearing in public and were therefore meant to be worn only in the privacy of the home. It is unusual to find them in portraiture, since most sitters were dressed in formal and far more expensive attire. The next sections explore the possible origins of this plain dress in portraiture.

---

[69] Garrard 2006, p. 43.
[70] Feinberg 2011, p. 106.
[71] The first man at the table on the right, who might be the father of the bride, wears a similar black band as well (not visible on the depicted detail). The panel is the last of a series of three depicting Bocaccio's story of Nastagio degli Onesti. The other three panels are now in the Museo del Prado in Madrid (inv. nos. 2838, 2839, 2840). On the panels and the identification of the portraits, see: Rubin 2007, p. 252-253, 358-359; Cecchi 2008, p. 202-218.
[72] 'possino avere al collaretto […] uno orlo di drappo di qualunque ragione o colore, non passando uno braccia di drappo per cioppa; et non possa essere di brocchato d'oro o d'ariento', Mazzi 1908a, p. 46, no. 10.
[73] 'Venzette collaretti da tenere le donne al chollo, di velo'; 'Più nastri et chollaretti stretti', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 64, fols. 34v, 35r. Translation: Stapleford 2013, p. 126.
[74] The complete trousseau is published by: Biagi 1899, p. 12-17, for the *collaretti* see p. 15.
[75] Mazzi 1908a, p. 49-50, no. 10.

3.1. Flemish origins

Flemish influence is clearly present in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci. Ginevra's three-quarter pose and the landscape in the background with its prominently exploited aerial perspective are generally regarded as Flemish in origin. Some art historians have suggested that portraits by Petrus Christus and Hans Memling were potential sources of inspiration for Leonardo.[76] This raises the question of whether Ginevra's dress can be related to Flemish portraiture as well.

In Italy Flemish portraiture was especially admired for its mimetic qualities.[77] The first chapter addressed the Netherlandish technique of oil painting as a stimulus for the emergence of a true-to-life depiction of luxury fabrics in Florentine portraiture. Andrea del Verrocchio, Leonardo's tutor, was well aware of these new techniques. Although he never adopted the medium of oil paint and remained faithful to the more traditional technique of tempera painting, his way of imitating gold brocade reveals a profound knowledge of the oil painting technique employed by the Pollaiuolo brothers and Flemish painters. He imitated an important aspect of this technique in *Tobias and the Angel*, in which he used yellow pigments instead of real gold to render the gold brocaded sleeves of Raphael and Tobias (fig. 53).[78] It has been suggested that Leonardo collaborated with Verrocchio on this altarpiece and was responsible for the Tobias's sleeve, among other things, although there is no evidence to support this thesis.[79] Verrocchio clearly followed the Flemish taste for a realistic depiction of gold brocaded fabrics. Leonardo may not have adopted this preference in his own work, but in fact he went a step further than his teacher by adopting the oil painting technique, though often combining it with tempera.

In the case of *Ginevra de' Benci* there is no doubt that the Flemish impact reached beyond the oil painting technique. Several authors noted the strong resemblance between Leonardo's *Ginevra* and the *Portrait of a Lady* by Petrus Christus, now in Berlin (fig. 54). Not only do they have the three-quarter pose in common, David Alan Brown and Paula Nuttall even considered some of their features, most notably the eyes, mouth and the expression, to be alike.[80] Leonardo certainly knew at least one portrait by Christus first-hand, for the Medici inventory lists 'a little panel depicting the head of a French woman, painted in oils, the work of Peter Cresci [Petrus Christus]of Bruges'.[81] The Benci family and Leonardo's tutor Verrocchio both had close connections with the Medici. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the Berlin portrait is the portrait mentioned in the inventory and most scholars now tend to reject the possibility.[82]

The other Flemish painter who may have had a profound influence on Ginevra's portrait is Hans Memling. None of his portraits are recorded in Florence, but Leonardo may

---

[76] Some authors have also mentioned similarities with Jan van Eyck, see for instance: Marani 1999, p. 38 (technique of highlighting ringlets); Nuttall 2004, p. 289, note 111 (using finger tips to smoothly blend contours). However, there are no known direct documentary links between Leonardo and portraits by Jan van Eyck.

[77] For a discussion of the Italian appreciation of Flemish portraiture, see: Nuttall 2002, p. 198-211.

[78] Dunkerton 2011, p. 6, 24. For an analysis of the different techniques Verrocchio used to render gold brocade, see: Dunkerton and Syson 2010, p. 15-19.

[79] Suggested by: Brown 1998, p. 54; refuted by: Dunkerton 2011, p. 24, 27-28. Marani, on the contrary, ascribed the dog and the fish to Leonardo on stylistic grounds, see: Marani 1999, p. 29-30.

[80] Kress 1995, vol. 1, p. 276-277; Brown 1998, p. 110; Nuttall 2004, p. 226. Petrus Christus is also mentioned as Leonardo's most important example by: Hills 1980, p. 615; Kemp 1981, p. 49.

[81] 'una tavoletta dipintovi di una una testa di dama franzese cholorito a olio, opera di Pietro Cresci fa Bruggia', Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992, p. 52, fol. 28r. Translation: Stapleford 2013, p. 114.

[82] On the possible identity of the sitter and the lack of evidence linking the portrait with the Medici, see: New York 1994, p. 166-169. Nuttall, however, still believes the Berlin portrait might be the same as the one mentioned in the Medici inventory, because of the strong similarities with *Ginevra de' Benci*, see: Nuttall 2004, p. 107-108. I thank Bernd Lindemann and Stephan Kemperdick for sharing their views on this portrait with me during a visit in to the Gemäldegalerie on 4 July 2013.

have become acquainted with his work through Bernardo Bembo. Before coming to Florence, Bembo had spent several years at the court of Burgundy from 1471 onwards as Venetian ambassador. During this period, he probably met Memling and at any rate acquired a diptych by the master, depicting Saint Veronica on one panel and John the Baptist on the other.[83] Bembo may even have commissioned his portrait from Memling. The latter's *Portrait of a Man*, now in Antwerp, has been identified as Bernardo Bembo on account of the laurel sprig in the foreground and the palm tree in the landscape just behind the sitter's left shoulder that together form of his personal emblem (fig. 55). The antique coin with the portrait of the Roman emperor Nero in the sitter's left hand is a fitting attribute for a humanist collector.[84] It is quite possible that Bembo took the portrait with him to Florence, which then would account for the similarities found in the landscape backgrounds in both portraits, such as a pond with trees on its banks and the distant mountains.[85]

David Alan Brown has pointed out that Ginevra's plain dress is in harmony with the landscape in the background.[86] With its blue laces, the brown dress echoes the colour scheme of the background. Although the texture of Ginevra's dress, which is rather undefined, lacks those qualities usually associated with Flemish painting, we cannot rule out that Leonardo found inspiration in Flemish portraiture with respect to this aspect too. Paul Hills has noted that Northern figures and their costumes would have been familiar to Florentine painters in a wide range of media, including paintings and tapestries, most of which are now probably lost.[87] It is significant to note that Flemish sitters were not portrayed wearing gold brocaded fabrics. Nor were Florentine women who had their portrait painted in Flanders wearing local fashion, as for instance Maria Baroncelli in her portrait by Memling (fig. 56). According to dress historian Mireille Madou these portraits are a faithful representation of Flemish civil dress. Gold brocades were exclusively worn at court, whereas rich burghers would dress in woollen cloth with a limited use of plain silk. In Flemish painting, gold brocaded dress is almost completely limited to the highest ranks of clergy, saints and exotic figures.[88] Leonardo may have preferred plain dress to set off the figure against the landscape background, as is often seen in Flemish portraits.

---

[83] On Bembo's stay in Burgundy, see: Giannetto 1985, p. 125-126. The panel with Saint Veronica is now in the National Gallery, Washington (inv. no. 1952.5.46.a), the panel depicting John the Baptist is in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (inv. no. 652). The diptych is known through correspondence of Bembo and Isabella d'Este, who borrowed it from him, see: De Vos 1994, p. 205, no. 50. The painting was also mentioned by Marcantonio Michiel in his description of the Venetian art collections, although he erronously identified the female saint as the Virgin Mary: 'El quadretto in due portelle del Zuan Baptista vestito cum lagnello che siede in un paese da una parte, et la nostra donna cun puttino da laltra in un altro paese, furona de man de Zuan Memglino, lanno 1470, in salvo el vero.' Michiel 2000, p. 30-31.

[84] First suggested by: De Vos 1994, p. 190, no. 42 (as one of more possibilities). The identification of Bembo was elaborated by Hilde Lobelle-Caluwé in: Bruges 1998, vol. 2, p. 17 and is endorsed by Till-Holger Borchert in: Madrid / Bruges / New York 2005, p. 160.

[85] Kress 1995, vol. 1, p. 277-288; Nuttall 2004, p. 224. Paul Hills also noted a strong resemblance between the device on the back of the Ginevra de' Benci and devices seen on the reverse of Memling's portraits. See: Hills 1980, p. 615.

[86] Brown 1998, p. 114.

[87] Hills 1980, p. 609.

[88] Madou 1994, p. 59. According to Madou, the portrait of Maarten van Nieuwenhove (Bruges, Sint-Janshospitaal, inv. no. OSJ.178.1), who wears a velvet doublet with silk ribbons, is an exception in its richness. Compare also: Herald 1981, p. 96, who notes a difference between Italian painting, where saints are depicted in plain drapery, and Northern painting, where gold brocade is hardly worn, except by saints, royalty and exotic foreigners.

3.2. Sculpting fashion

Besides Flemish paintings, portraits in other mediums may have inspired Leonardo's choice to dress Ginevra austerely. Leonardo's teacher Verrocchio was trained as a goldsmith and working as a painter, but he was primarily active as a sculptor. His sculpting work heavily influenced his painting. The sculptural quality of the figures in Verrocchio's paintings is widely recognized, as is his influence in this respect on Leonardo. Ginevra's portrait is no exception and therefore it is often compared to Verrocchio's *Bust of a Lady with Flowers*, which may have inspired Leonardo to include his sitter's hands (figs. 1, 39). This bust is also regarded as a model that Leonardo could have turned to in his desire to break with the convention of painted profile portraits.[89]

It is particularly revealing to extend the comparison of Ginevra's likeness with these busts to the dress of the sculpted female sitters. Verrocchio's *Lady with Flowers* is dressed as simply as Ginevra, although not in exactly the same garments. She wears a free flowing dress that has been gathered at the neckline. A sash with fringed edges is tied around the waist, pulling the dress down at the back. Verrocchio devoted much attention to the rendering of the pleating of the sash and the fabric of the dress around the arms and the upper body. The girl does not wear any jewels. Her cleavage is covered with a veil, similar to Ginevra's. The sitter's hair is bound in a knot and covered with a small cap.

A second female bust by Verrocchio, now in the Frick Collection, shows a more lavishly dressed sitter (fig. 57). Opinions on the dating of the bust, all based on stylistic grounds, vary from the 1460s to the 1480s. It was rightly noted that the sitter's hairstyle with abundant curls on either side of the head does not appear in portraiture prior to c. 1470 and consequently the bust should not be dated earlier, leaving open the possibility of a date in the 1480s.[90] The sitter wears a *giornea* closed at the front with an elaborate leaf-shaped clasp. On the sleeves of her undergown a textile pattern is indicated in bas-relief, showing a large thistle with seven seeds at its core. Ulrich Middeldorf has interpreted this motif as the testicles that are part of the Colleoni family device and consequently believed he could confirm an earlier identification of the sitter as Medea Colleoni (d. 1470).[91] However, the shape and number of the seeds do not resemble the Colleoni device at all, which is why the identification is now usually dismissed. To this should be added that the bust dates from after Medea's death.[92] Not particularly convincing is Alison Luchs's tentative idea that this bust represents Albiera degli Albizzi (1457-1473).[93]

A third bust, attributed either to Verrocchio or to his circle, shows a young woman dressed in a luxurious *cotta* and is now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (fig. 58).[94] Eleonora Luciano noted strong similarities between this bust and the *Portrait of a Lady in Red* in the National Gallery in London (fig. 23). Both women wear a cap of the same shape and a *cotta*

---

[89] Brown 1998, p. 109-110; Washington 2001, p. 142.

[90] For an overview of various opinions on the dating of the bust, see: Butterfield 1997, p. 203 (who dates the bust to the 1460s). Eleonora Luciano commented on the hairstyle and tends to date the bust to the 1480s because the sitter's tight sleeves resemble those of Giovanna degli Albizzi, worn in her posthumous portrait by Ghirlandaio that dates from 1488, the year of Giovanna's death, or after (fig. 61). See: Washington 2001, p. 166.

[91] Middeldorf 1977, p. 10-14.

[92] For the rejection of this identification, see: Butterfield 1997, p. 203. Only challenged by Francesco Caglioti in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 110-111, cat. 13, adhering to a date of c. 1465-1466 and arguing that variations in heraldic devices are possible, especially on dress.

[93] Alessandro Braccesi dedicated a poem to Albiera's marble bust, in which he praised her beauty and lamented her early death. See: Luchs 2012, p. 75-95. However, the identity of the sitter for this particular bust is uncertain due to a lack of written evidence.

[94] On the attribution, see Alison Wright in: London 1999, p. 324, cat. 82; Eleonora Luciano in: Washington 2001, p. 169, cat. 24.

with sleeves of a different fabric. In the painted portrait this is easily seen through the difference in colour, as well as the size of the pomegranate pattern, which is notably larger on the sleeves. The sculpted bust shows the same size difference, displaying two smaller, symmetrically placed thistles on the bodice and a larger one on each sleeve.[95] As the sitters of the New York and the Washington busts are shown in sumptuous fabrics, the absence of jewellery on both busts is all the more striking. Verrocchio was not the only sculptor who omitted jewels and sometimes even luxury fabrics, as for instance in his Bargello bust.

As early as the 1460s, the Florentine sculptor Desiderio da Settignano portrayed his female sitters dressed in plain fabrics, wearing hardly any jewellery. The most famous example is the bust now in the Skulpturensammlung of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin (fig. 59). Notwithstanding a lack of evidence, the sitter is traditionally identified as Marietta di Lorenzo Strozzi, whose marble bust was praised by Vasari.[96] Desiderio's sitter wears a *gamurra* with a pleated skirt and a tight-fitting bodice that is laced up at the front. He has carefully observed the wrinkles of the sleeves and even meticulously rendered the small tucks where the sleeve is set into the armhole. The only jewellery adorning the young girl is an unobtrusive *frenello* of tiny pearls worn across her forehead.

Another bust, ascribed to Desiderio da Settignano or his workshop, is now in the Bargello in Florence (fig. 60).[97] The unidentified sitter is similarly dressed, in a laced up *gamurra* that reveals parts of the wrinkled *camicia* underneath. The sitter's neck and part of her back are exposed by a plunging neckline. Her hair has been bound up with ribbons and the only jewel is a head brooch attached to those ribbons. The fine wrinkles of the linen *camicia* form a marked contrast with the bold pleats of the sleeves and the tightly fitted material of the bodice. In both cases, the sculptor was more concerned with a meticulous rendering of the draping of the various fabrics than of textures and patterns.

It has gone unnoticed so far that the vogue for plainly dressed sitters first took off in sculpted marble busts and painted portraits followed soon afterwards.[98] In the 1460s and 1470s we encounter both austerely and more lavishly dressed sitters in sculpted marble busts. None of the busts shows lavish jewellery, though it would have been appropriate given the social standing of the sitters. In fact, most sitters were portrayed without any jewellery at all, even those wearing sumptuous dress made of patterned fabrics. This may be easily explained by the nature of the different mediums. Carving the pattern of a gold brocaded pile-on-pile or voided velvet is a demanding task, as is a faithful rendering of jewellery, and the effort invested would not add significantly to the aesthetic appeal of the image. On the contrary, the pattern of a fabric

---

[95] For some scholars these different motifs were a reason to doubt the status of the bust as a fifteenth-century original. For references, see: Eleonora Luciano in: Washington 2001, p. 169, cat. 24. However, the combination of a bodice and sleeves of contrasting fabrics was characteristic of Florentine Quattrocento fashion.

[96] The identification of the Berlin bust as Marietta Strozzi was recently upheld by Francesco Caglioti in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 107-109, cat. 12; Florence / Paris 2013, p. 506, cat. X.17. Coonin objected to this identification and suggested the bust by Desiderio da Settignano now in the Bargello is a more likely candidate (fig. 60), see: Coonin 2009, p. 49. Unlike male busts, female busts lack inscriptions, which makes a sound identification of the sitter impossible.

[97] For a critical discussion of the attribution, see Marc Bormand in: Paris 2006, p. 146-148.

[98] In portrait medals, a medium used in Florence for female portraits only from the 1480s onwards, sitters are usually depicted wearing plain dress combined with a necklace with a pendant, such as the portrait medal of Ludovica Tornabuoni (fig. 32). Other examples are the portrait medals of Francesca de' Lapi, Lodovica Morelli, Maria Morelli, Maria de' Mucini, Maria Poliziana, Costantia Oricellar, Camilla Buondelmonti and Giovanna degli Albizzi. See: Hill 1930, nos. 979, 985, 989-9912, 1002, 1011-1012, 1021.

would distract attention from the three-dimensional qualities that are essential to a bust. To the Renaissance sculptor, the main focus was on volume rather than surface details such as textile designs. All busts reveal a great interest in drapery as an effective means of conveying body mass and sometimes even the suggestion of movement. Since Leonardo was trained in a sculptor's workshop, scholars have generally accepted the idea that he adopted the sculptural qualities of Verrocchio's figures, especially in his early works. However, the plain dress and the absence of jewellery in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci may have their origins in marble busts as well.

4.1. Ginevra's portrait and the *paragone*

The comparison of painting with sculpture as well as with other art forms continued to play an important role throughout Leonardo's career. In his later writings, he would devote much attention to the question which art form was superior over the others, a discussion that is known as the *paragone*, which literally means comparison. The origin of the debate was rooted in antiquity, when painting and sculpture were compared with the literary arts in order to demonstrate the merits of the latter.[99] Renaissance theorists often referred to this practice. A classical source that was explicitly mentioned by Leon Battista Alberti in his *Treatise on Painting* was the Graeco-Roman writer and rhetorician Lucian of Samosta (c. 120-c. 180), who addressed the issue in his *Eikones*, written in Greek. [100] In this dialogue two men, Lycinus and Polystratus, discuss the beauty of Panthea, the mistress of emperor Verus. Lycinus praises Panthea's physical appearance, comparing it to the images of beautiful women by ancient Greek sculptors, painters and poets. Polystratus, however, argues that Panthea's true beauty is not of a physical but rather a spiritual nature. He convinces his interlocutor that both her inner and her outer beauty are more accurately conveyed in writing than in painting, a medium that could not depict Panthea's character. Only the orator, he claims, can successfully describe both outer and inner beauty. His work is therefore more enduring and more pleasing than the other art forms.

These ideas were echoed in the tradition of vernacular poetry, above all by Petrarch, who devoted two sonnets to Simone Martini's portrait of his beloved Laura (app. 5A and 5B).[101] In the first, he addressed the ancient Greek sculptor Polyclitus, who was famous for his selection of the most beautiful body parts of different women in order to create an image of perfect beauty. The poet states that even if Polyclitus were to look for a thousand years, he would never find such beauty as Laura's. Petrarch further exclaimed that Simone must have painted Laura's portrait in heaven, for on earth, where mortality reigns, it would be an impossible achievement. In the second sonnet, he mourns the fact that the portrait is not alive for it lacks speech and mind. As Elizabeth Cropper pointed out in one of her seminal articles on female beauty in Italian Renaissance portraiture, painters and art theorists such as Alberti were profoundly influenced by the ancient *paragone* tradition and tried to disprove the poet's exclusive claim to the conveyance of virtue and beauty.[102]

Leonardo da Vinci is known to be one of the chief fifteenth-century contributors to the *paragone* debate. The first chapter of the *Trattato della pittura* is entirely devoted to it. Contrary to the ancient authors, Leonardo did not only contrasted the visual and literary arts, but also the

---

[99] Farago 1992, p. 32-35, with further references.
[100] Alberti 1972, p. 94-95, Book III, 53. Lucian's text is published and translated in: Lucian 1913-67, vol. 4, p. 256-295 (1925). See also: Cropper 1986, p. 175-176.
[101] The painter's inability to convey a lady's character and the lifelike portrait lacking voice or breath became true *topoi* in vernacular poetry. On this subject, see: Rogers 1986, p. 291-299. For various Greek epigrams concerning the same issue, see also: Shearman 1995, p. 114.
[102] Cropper 1986, p. 175-182.

different mediums within the visual arts, that is painting and sculpture, and he included music as well. Painting, Leonardo argued, is actually a science, based on linear perspective, and therefore the highest art form. Music, although a 'sister art', is of lesser standing because it is ephemeral. Poetry is also inferior because it consists of mere words, whereas painting is a direct reflection of nature.[103] Leonardo provided an example: 'Take a poet who describes the beauties of a lady to her lover, and take a painter who figures her, you will see where nature will lead the enamoured judge.'[104] He elaborated on the same argument later on in the text:

And, if the poet says he kindles love in men, this is the principle thing in all species of animals. The painter has the power to do the same, and much more because he puts the actual effigy of the thing loved in front of the lover. Often the lover kisses the effigy and speaks to it, which he would not do if the same beauties were put in front of him by the writer. [The painter] overpowers the imagination of men even more, for he makes them love and fall in love with a painting that does not represent any living woman.[105]

Leonardo continues this defence of painting with a story that refers to Ovid's account of the sculptor Pygmalion, who fell in love with a statue he had carved. Leonardo tells of a man who bought one of his paintings depicting a female saint. The man fell in love with it and returned to Leonardo, asking to have the attributes of the saint removed, so that he could freely caress and kiss the image. In the end, he decided to remove the painting from his house to extinguish his ardour. Finally, Leonardo regards painting to be superior to sculpture on the basis of its intellectual merits. The practice of sculpture requires more physical effort and moreover lacks qualities such as the contrast of light and dark, colour and linear perspective.[106]

Wendy Steadman Sheard argued that Leonardo became acquainted with these topics in Verrocchio's workshop, and later introduced them in Milan. The fact that Verrocchio was a sculptor as well as a painter would by definition have aroused a discussion on the merits of the two arts.[107] The artist's workshop, however, was not the only place where the *paragone* was debated. The topic was also high on the agenda in the intellectual circle of the Medici. The Neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino, who was a trusted friend of Bernardo Bembo, wrote about the issue several times.[108] In a letter addressed to Bembo and Lorenzo de' Medici, he argues that the sight of virtue is far more convincing than a description with words, his message being remarkably similar to Leonardo's:

It is pointless for you to praise a maiden to the ears of a young man and describe her in words in order to inflict upon him pangs of love, when you can bring her beautiful form before his eyes. Point, if you can,

---

[103] For a summary of Leonardo's arguments, see: Farago 1992, p. 92-94.
[104] 'Tolgassi un poeta che descriva le bellezze d'una donna al suo inamorato, et tolgassi un pittore che la figuri, vedrassi dove la natura volgera più il giudicatore inamorato.' Transcription and translation: Farago 1992, p. 210-211, no. 19, lines 39-42.
[105] 'et se 'l poeta dice di fare accendere gli homini ad amare è cosa principale della spetie di tutti gli animali. Il pittore à potenzia di fare il medesimo e tanto più che vi mette inanzi a l'amante la propria effigie della cosa amata. Il quale speso fa con quella bacciandola e parlando con quella, quello che no farebbe con le medesme bellezze postole inanzi dal scrittore. E tanto più supera l'ingegni de li homini, ad amare et inamorarsi di pittura che no rapressenta alcuna donna viva.' Transcription and translation: Farago 1992, p. 230-231, no. 25, lines 18-27. Farago does not translate 'ingegni'. She regards Leonardo's use of the terms 'imaginatione', 'fantasia' and 'ingegno' as almost indistinguishable. See: Farago 1992, p. 213, notes 71 and 72.
[106] See especially: Farago 1992, p. 257-261, chapter 36.
[107] Sheard 1992, p. 79, esp. note 57.
[108] On Bernardo Bembo's circle of Florentine friends and their philosophical discussions, see: Bolzoni 2010, p. 334-344, and esp. p. 334-335 for his relation with Marsilio Ficino.

to her beautiful form; then you have no further need of words. For it is impossible to say how much more easily and powerfully Beauty herself calls forth love than do words. Therefore, if we bring into the view of man the marvellous sight of Virtue herself, there will be no further need of our persuading words: the vision itself will persuade more quickly than can be conceived.[109]

Leonardo thus found himself in an environment where the *paragone* must have been lively debated. Not only his teacher, but also his teacher's patrons, the Medici, as well as the most likely patron of Ginevra's portrait, Bernardo Bembo, were involved in the philosophical discussion.

Martin Kemp was the first in 1981 to acknowledge that Leonardo may have had the *paragone* in mind when he was working on the *Ginevra de' Benci*. Kemp suggests that some of Leonardo's later arguments on the superiority of painting over sculpture were 'precociously rehearsed' in the portrait.[110] It was Elizabeth Cropper, however, who in 1986 firmly placed Leonardo's portrait in the *paragone* tradition. She pointed out that the juniper (*ginepro*) behind Ginevra's head functions as a pun on her name in the same way Petrarch played with the name Laura and the Italian word for laurel, *lauro*.[111] More importantly, Cropper also connected the reverse of the portrait with Petrarch's poetry. In the emblem, which had not yet been identified as Bembo's at the time, she recognized the palm and laurel branch that Petrarch describes in a poem. Laura's spirit comes to visit him after her death, carrying a little palm branch and a laurel branch. When the poet asks her what these branches mean, she replies:

Answer yourself, you whose pen so honours one of them. The palm is victory, and I when still young conquered the world and myself; the laurel means triumph, of which I am worthy, thanks to that Lord who gave me strength.[112]

Cropper thus interpreted the emblem as a visual means to portray Ginevra's character and virtue that, as the device states, adorned her beauty. According to Cropper, by using a metaphor derived from Petrarch, 'the poet's denial of the validity of painted appearance is refuted through

---

[109] 'Frustra puellam adolescentis auribus laudas verbisque describis, quo stimulos illi amoris incutias, ubi ipsam pulchrae puellae formam adolescentis oculis queas offerre. Monstra, (si potes) fomosam digito, nihil amplius hic tibi opus est verbis. Dici enim non potest quando facilius vehementiusque pulchritudo ipsa, quam verba provocet ad amandum. Ergo si mirabilem virtitis ipsius speciem in cosnceptum hominum proferamus, haus opus erit suasionibus nostris ulterius, ipsamet citius, quam cogitari persuadebit.' From the letter 'Pictura pulchri corporis et pulchare mentis', Marsilio Ficino to Lorenzo de' Medici and Bernardo Bembo. Ficino 1962, vol. 1, Lib. V, p. 207. Translation: Ficino 1988, p. 66. David Alan Brown already noted that this letter can be read as a 'subtext' for Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*. See: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 365, note 14.

[110] Kemp 1981, p. 49.

[111] Cropper 1986, p. 183. Mary Garrard objected to this, reasoning that, according to Leonardo's own statement that 'if Petrarch was so fond of bay, it was because it is of a good taste with sausages and thrush: I cannot put any value on their foolery' ('Se 'l Petrarca amò si forte il lauro, fu perch' egli è buon fralla salsiccia e tor[do]; io nō posso di lor ciancie far tesauro'), he disliked Petrarchan allegories. Garrard 1992, p. 63. For Leonardo's remark, see: Richter no. 1332. Kemp placed the joke in the context of anti-Petrarchian burlesque. Although this genre satirized the well-known clichés of Petrarchan poetry, its occurrence in Leonardo's writings does not necessarily exclude the possibility of Petrarchan influence on his work. In fact, Kemp argues that the 'poetic impulse' is key to understanding Leonardo's oeuvre. See: Kemp 1985, p. 203-204.

[112] 'Tu medesmo ti rispondi, / tu la cui non penna tanto l'una honora: / palma e victoria, et io, giovene anchora, / vinsi il mondo, et me stessa; il lauro segna / triumpho, ond'io son degna, / merce di quel Signor che mi die' forza', Petrarca 1976, p. 558-559, no. 359.

painting itself'.[113] Cropper's theory has been reiterated by several art historians, especially by Charles Dempsey, who once more underlined the combination of physical likeness and inner virtue. He discerningly noted that it is not necessarily Ginevra's true character that is conveyed, but the idea of her virtue projected by her courtly lover Bernardo Bembo. This notion was of course firmly rooted in vernacular love poetry.[114]

Since Bembo's liaison with Ginevra was the subject of several poems, a direct comparison can be made of how Ginevra is represented in her portrait and in the verses that celebrate her beauty and Bembo's love. In the first of four poems dedicated to 'the beautiful lady, Ginevra de' Benci', Alessandro Braccesi immediately sets the tone: 'One who desired to sing the praises of your character and beauty, for which no other lady has been more famous than you, would try to number the sands of the sea and would attempt too vast a task'.[115]

The theme of beauty of mind is repeated throughout Cristoforo Landino's writings as well. He dedicated six poems to Bembo, in which we find the same opposition of body and soul. In one of the poems he explains that Bembo did not admire Ginevra for her beauty, which would diminish over time, but for her character. This is the kind of love, Landino reminds the reader, that one should aim for:

> For any lover who is bound by beauty alone struggles on slippery grounds with unsteady step. But if anyone loves an excellent mind, a keen intelligence, and a heart filled with varied blessings, he follows the beauty which neither old age nor any great disaster from the sky can spoil. Learn, you mortals, that beauty is to be desired for the mind, and not the body, and learn to love its true glory.[116]

In another poem, he elaborates on the literary dictum that virtue is expressed through beauty:

> Bembo's love is such as the divine page of Plato expresses with the eloquence of Socrates. For love, since desire is excited by the beautiful, loves the beautiful and rejoices in images of beauty. But whatever is good is beautiful, everything base is wrong; thus love demands what is good and avoids what is evil. It is with these flames and with such a love that Bembo is on fire and burns, and Ginevra dwells in the midst of his heart. Her figure indeed is beautiful, and her soul too is beautiful within it; you do not see well, Bembo, which of these is superior. Therefore there is no cause for wonder, for both the virtue and the beauty of your lady give you mighty seeds to make your fire grow.[117]

---

[113] Cropper 1986, p. 187-189.

[114] Dempsey 2012, p. 35-41. Other scholars who connected the *Ginevra de' Benci* with the paragone tradition are: Kress 1995, vol. 3, p. 271-273, Weil-Garris Brandt 1998, p. 15-19; Feinberg 2011, p. 107-109.

[115] 'Ille sali numerare licet pertentet arenas / Immensumque nimis aggrediatur opus, / Qui morum et formae studeat tibi dicere laudes, / Te quibus haud unquam clarior ulla fuit.' Cited from: Walker 1967, p. 36, no. 1; translation (John F. C. Richards) p. 37.

[116] 'Nam quisquis sola forma vincitur amator, / lubricus instabili nititur ille gradu; / si quis at egregiam mentem, si diligit acre / ingenium et variis corda referta bonis, / hic pulchrum sequitur, quod nec vitiare vetustas, / ulla nec a caelo magna ruina potsest. / Discite mortales animo, non corpore formam / optandam, et verum discite amare decus.' Cited from: Walker 1967, p. 30, no. VI, lines 21-28; translation (John F. C. Richards) p. 34.

[117] 'Talis amor Bembi, qualem divina Platonis / pagina Socratis exprimit eloquiis. / Namque amor a pulchro cum sit, perculsa cupido / pulchrum amat at pulchris gaudet imaginibus; / at quodcumque bonum, pulchrum est, turpe omne nefandum: / sic bona deposcit, sic mala vitat amor. / His flammis Bemus talique accensus amore / uritur, et medio corde Ginevra sedet. / Forma quidem pulchra est, animus quoque pulcher in illa : / horum utrum superet, non bene, Bembe, vides. / Ergo nil mirum est, nam maxima semina flammis / virtus et dominae dant tibi forma tuis.' Cited from: Walker 1967, p. 29, no. V, lines 5-16; translation (John F. C. Richards) p. 32-33.

Landino continues to describe Ginevra's beauty in the familiar tropes of Petrarchan love poetry. Ginevra's hair is golden, her face has the colour of white lilies mixed with red roses, and her neck is snow-white. Venus has sprinkled beauty in her eyes and bright red flowers fade next to her red lips. After this lavish praise, however, the poet expresses his inability to convey Ginevra's character with human voice, referring again to the ancient question which art form is capable of conveying inner virtue.

The poetry dedicated to Ginevra clarifies the humanist spirit of Bembo's circle of literary friends and complements the motto on the back of her portrait. The Benci themselves were also part of this learned milieu. Ginevra's father, Amerigo de' Benci, was a collector of ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts and was a patron of writers and philosophers. As a personal friend of Marsilio Ficino, he had presented him with a manuscript of one of Plato's dialogues in 1462. Benci was a prominent member of the Neo-Platonic academy and even received its members in his private *palazzo*. After his death in 1468 his son Giovanni, with whom Leonardo left part of his possessions when he went off to Milan, continued his father's activities.[118] Consequently, the young Leonardo was familiar with Neo-Platonic thought, the tradition of vernacular love poetry and the rivalry of the arts, not only through the members of the Academy and their patrons, including the Medici, the Benci and Bernardo Bembo, but also through the Verrocchio workshop.[119]

4.2. The poetics of plain dress

Since the *paragone* debate is unanimously accepted as the key context of Ginevra's portrait, it is surprising that her restrained attire has never been analysed from this perspective, especially since Leonardo himself devoted a passage to female beauty and dress (app. 1, no. 1):

> Do you not see that among human beauties it is a very beautiful face and not rich ornaments that stops passers-by? And this I say to you who adorn your figures with gold or other rich trimmings, do you not see beautiful young people diminish their excellence with excessive ornamentation? Have you never seen women in the hills wrapped in plain and poor cloths possessing greater beauty than those who are adorned?

Here Leonardo strongly objects to the depiction of jewellery and other ornaments in painting.[120] He continues along the same lines with a discussion on hairstyles (app. 1, no. 1):

> Do not paint affected curls or hair-dressings such as are worn by fools fearful that a single, misplaced lock will bring disgrace upon them and that bystanders will be diverted from their own thoughts and talk of nothing else and blame them. Such people have the mirror and comb for their advisors, and the wind that disarranges their carefully dressed hair is their main enemy. Depict hair which an imaginary wind causes to play about youthful faces, and adorn heads you paint with curling locks of various kinds. Do not do like those who plaster hair with glue, making faces appear as if turned to glass, another increased madness for

---

[118] Brown 1998, p. 119-121. On Amerigo de' Benci, see Y. Renouard-E. Ragni in: DBI vol. 8 (1966), s.v. 'Benci, Amerigo', p. 182-183.

[119] On the influence of the Neo-Platonists on Leonardo's later writings on, amongst other issues, the *paragone*, compare: Kemp 1985, p. 197-200.

[120] Dress historians interpret this passage as an advice on how to dress properly. See for instance: Herald 1981, p. 158; Gnignera 2010, p. 195. In my opinion, this is not Leonardo's objective. Instead, he addresses the painter, as becomes especially clear in the second part of this passage, cited below, which contains directions for the painter, such 'do not paint affected curls…' or 'depict hair…'. Leonardo's own dress preferences and his attitude towards dressing ostentatiously in reality will be discussed in chapter 3, in the section entitled 'Leonardo and personal adornment, p. 104-106.

those for whom it is not enough that mariners coming from eastern parts should bring gum arabic to prevent the wind from changing the order of their ringlets, so that they must still keep seeking a remedy.

This part of the *Trattato della pittura* is little-known among art historians and its sources have yet to be traced.[121] Leonardo probably wrote this passage around 1492, when he had already been working in Milan for about a decade.[122] However, the origin of the ideas presented here is much older and Leonardo had probably already become acquainted with this notion of beauty through the circle of Neo-Platonists when he was still living in Florence.

Recently, Kelly Olson studied the opinions on women's dress and beauty expressed by ancient Roman writers. It is remarkable how similar their ideas are to Leonardo's. To the Romans, Olson summarizes, beauty and ethics were closely linked. It was feared that women had such strong cravings for precious jewellery that they were willing to trade sexual favours for it. Modesty, however, was considered crucial to a woman's beauty. Thus the younger Seneca writes to his mother that one ornament, *pudicitia* (chastity), is her greatest honour. A woman should adorn herself with chastity instead of gold and pearls, which would only distract from her natural beauty. Plutarch, for example, stated that it is not gold, precious stones and scarlet that make a woman beautiful, but dignity, good behaviour and modesty instead.[123]

Cicero (106 BC-43 BC) is another Roman author who touched upon the subject of female beauty and the absence of ornament. In his book on rhetoric, *Orator*, he distinguishes three styles of speaking in public: plain, highly adorned and a style in between those two. When explaining the first type, he compares its beauty with that of an unadorned woman:

Just as some women are said to be handsomer when unadorned – this very lack of ornament becomes them – so this plain style gives pleasure when unembellished: there is something in both cases which lends greater charm, but without showing itself. Also all noticeable ornament, pearls as it were, will be excluded; not even curling irons will be used; all cosmetics, artificial red and white, will be rejected; only elegance and neatness will remain.[124]

Cicero's argumentation contains noteworthy similarities to Leonardo's text. Not only do both of them argue that absence of ornament can increase a woman's beauty, they both advise avoiding artificial curls as well. Although Leonardo only learned to read Latin at a later age, there are several ways in which he could have familiarized himself with Cicero's ideas. For instance, Bernardo Bembo owned a copy of Cicero's *Orator*.[125] Cicero was admired by the Florentine humanists as well and Leon Battista Alberti, whose treatise on painting was a source of

[121] An exception is: Syson 2011, p. 29. Syson connects the passage with Vespasiano da Bisticci's story of the Sienese ambassador in Naples, whose extravagant clothes of gold tissue were ruined when all the moderately dressed Neapolitan courtiers deliberately rubbed against him in a small room. To my mind, however, Bisticci and Leonardo had different objectives. Leonardo's remarks concern painting, whereas Bisticci comments on extravagant dress at court, a concern that Leonardo did not share. See also the previous footnote.
[122] Date suggested by: Pedretti 1964, p. 195.
[123] Olson 2008, p. 89-92, with reference to a wide variety of Roman writers on the subject.
[124] 'Nam ut mulieres pulchriores esse dicuntur nonnullae inornatae quas ad ipsum deceat, sic haec subtilis oratio etiam incompta delectate; fit enim quidam in utroque, quo sit venustius sed non ut appareat. Tum removetibur omnis insignis ornatus quasi margaritum, ne calamistri quidem adhibebuntur. Fucati vero medicamenta candoris et ruboris Omnia repellentur: elegantia modo et munditia remanebit.' Cicero 1939, p. 362-365 (translation: Harry Mortimer Hubbell).
[125] The manuscript is now in the British Library in London (Add MS 10965). It was probably copied in Florence around 1415-20 and the appearance of a typical *manicula* (pointing hand to indicate a part of the text) in Bembo's style, firmly establishes his ownership. See: Giannetto 1985, p. 419.

inspiration for Leonardo, encouraged painters to learn from the art of rhetoric and poetry: 'Next, it will be of advantage if they [painters] take pleasure in poets and orators, for these have many ornaments in common with the painter.'[126]

Hellmut Wohl has argued that Cicero's concept of beauty was indeed incorporated in art theory by at least one of the Florentine humanists, namely Cristoforo Landino, who had also written poetry dedicated to Bembo and Ginevra. When Landino published his edition of Dante's *Divina Commedia* in 1481, he included a homage to several fifteenth-century Florentine artists in the preface, including Masaccio:

> Masaccio was an excellent imitator of nature, with great and comprehensive relief, a good composer and pure without *ornato*, because he devoted himself solely to the imitation of the truth and to the relief of his figures. He was as sure and good a master of perspective as anyone in those times, and worked with great facility.[127]

According to Wohl, the description of Masaccio's style stands out in the art criticism of its day and the phrase 'puro senza ornato' is a direct reference to Cicero's description of the unadorned style.[128]

Alberti was greatly influenced by Cicero as well and the latter's ideas not only permeate the treatise on painting. In his writings on family life, the *Libri della famiglia*, written between 1433 and 1440, we again encounter a notion of female beauty similar to Cicero's.[129] Alberti composed his four books on the family as a fictional dialogue between several members of the Alberti clan, amongst whom the elderly and mature Giannozzo and the younger Lionardo. When they discuss in the second book why a future wife has to be beautiful, Lionardo expresses the familiar view that inner and outer beauty are inextricably linked. He states: 'It is a well-known saying among poets: "Beautiful character dwells in a beautiful body."'[130] In book three they elaborate on the subject of wearing make-up, after Lionardo remarks that the ancient authors he likes to read instructed their wives not to cover themselves with powders and dyes, so as not to appear less virtuous than they were.[131] Giannozzo thereupon recalls how he reprimanded his own wife when she once wore make-up:

> The woman's character is the jewel of her family; the mother's purity has always been a part of the dowry she passes on to her daughters; her purity has always far outweighed her beauty. A beautiful face is praised, but unchaste eyes make it ugly through men's scorn and too often flushed with shame or pale with sorrow and melancholy. A handsome person is pleasing to see, but a shameless gesture or an act of incontinence in an instant renders her appearance vile.[132]

---

[126] 'Proxime non ab re erit se poetis atque rhetoribus delctabuntur.' Alberti 1972, p. 94-95, Book III, 53 (translation: Cecil Grayson).
[127] 'Fu Masaccio optimo imitatore di natura, di gran rilievo universale, buono componitore et puro sanza ornato, perche solo si decte all'imitatione del vero, et al rilievo delle figure: fu certo et buono prospectivo quanto altro di quegli tempi et di gran faciliti nel fare.' Italian text and translation cited from: Wohl 1993, p. 256.
[128] For a comparison of Landino's text on Masaccio with other contemporary writings on the same painter and with Cicero, see: Wohl 1993, p. 256-257.
[129] On the importance of Cicero to Alberti's writings, see: Spencer 1957, p. 34-36.
[130] 'Notissimo tra i poeti detto: 'Gratissima virtú vien d'un bel corpo." Alberti 1969b, Book II, p. 133. Translation: Alberti 1969a, p. 116.
[131] Make-up is extensively discussed by many ancient authors and its use was often associated with sexual impurity. For an overview, see: Olson 2008, p. 58-68, 80-81.
[132] 'La onestà della donna sempre fu ornamento della famiglia; la onestà della madre sempre fu parte di dote alle figliuole; la onestà in ciascuna sempre piú valse che ogni bellezza. Lodasi il bello viso, ma e'

This chastity, he explained to his wife, should be safeguarded through virtuous behaviour and a modest appearance:

To be praised for your chastity, you must shun every deed that lacks true nobility […]. You will disdain, first of all, those vanities which some females imagine will please men. All made up and plastered and painted and dressed in lascivious and improper clothing, they suppose they are more attractive to men than when adorned with true simplicity and true virtue. Vain and foolish women are these who imagine that when they appear in make-up and look far from virtuous they will be praised by those who see them. They do not realize that they are provoking disapproval and harming themselves.[133]

Marani has proposed an altogether different ancient source for Leonardo's preference for plain dress. Although he has not considered Leonardo's own writings on the subject, he did notice that the attire of the *Lady with an Ermine*, identified as Cecilia Gallerani and painted about fifteen years after *Ginevra de' Benci*, is fairly plain, especially in comparison to other Milanese court portraits (fig. 3). Marani suggested Leonardo knew Lucian's *Essay on the House*, in which a decorated ceiling of a hall is compared to a woman who needs but few ornaments to highlight her beauty. The ceiling should not be decorated too lavishly, Lucian states:

but only in such a degree as would suffice a modest and beautiful woman to set off her beauty - a delicate chain round her neck, a light ring on her finger, pendants in her ears, a buckle, a band that confines the luxuriance of her hair and adds as much to her good looks as a purple border adds to a gown. It is courtesans, especially the less attractive of them, who have clothing all purple and necks all gold, trying to secure seductiveness by extravagance and to make up for their lack of beauty by the addition of extraneous charms; they think that their arms will look better when they are bright with gold, and that the unshapeliness of their feet will escape notice in golden sandals, and that their very faces will be lovelier when seen together with something very bright. This is the course they follow; but a modest girl uses only what gold is sufficient and necessary, and would not be ashamed of her beauty, I am sure, if she were to show it unadorned.'[134]

---

disonesti occhi lo fanno lordo di biasimo e spesso troppo acceso di vergogna o pallido di dolore e tristezza d'animo. Piace una signorile persona, ma uno disonesto cenno, uno atto di incontinenza subito la rende vilissima.' Alberti 1969b, Book III, p. 272-273. Translation: Alberti 1969a, p. 215

[133] 'Adunque, volendo essere lodata di tua onestà, tu fuggirai ogni atto non lodato [...]. E in prima arai in odio tutte quelle leggerezze colle quali alcune femmine studiano piacere agli uomini, credendosi cosí lisciate, impiastrate e dipinte, in quelli loro abiti lascivi e inonesti, piú essere agli uomini grate che monstrandosi ornate di pura simplicità e vera onestà; ché bene sono stultissime e troppo vane femmine, ove porgendosi lisciate e disoneste credono essere da chi le guata lodate, e non s'aveggono del biasimo loro e del danno.', Alberti 1969b, Book III, p. 273. Translation: Alberti 1969a, p. 215.

[134] 'ἀλλ᾽ ὁπόσον ἂν καὶ γυναικὶ σώφρονι καὶ καλῇ ἀρκέσῃ ἐπισημότερον ἐργάσασθαι τὸ κάλλος, ἢ περὶ τῇ δειρῇ λεπτός τις ὅρμος ἢ περὶ τῷ δακτύλῳ σφενδόνη εὔφορος ἢ ἐν τοῖν ὤτοιν ἐλλόβια ἢ πόρπη τις ἢ ταινία τὸ ἄφετον τῆς κόμης συνδέουσα, τοσοῦτον τῇ εὐμορφίᾳ προστιθεῖσα ὅσον τῇ ἐσθῆτι ἡ πορφύρα: αἱ δέ γε ἑταῖραι, καὶ μάλιστα αἱ ἀμορφότεραι αὐτῶν, καὶ τὴν ἐσθῆτα ὅλην πορφυρᾶν καὶ τὴν δειρὴν χρυσῆν πεποίηνται, τῷ πολυτελεῖ θηρώμεναι τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν καὶ τὸ ἐνδέον τῷ καλῷ προσθέσει τοῦ ἔξωθεν τερπνοῦ παραμυθούμεναι: ἡγοῦνται γὰρ καὶ τὴν ὠλένην αὐταῖς στιλπνοτέραν φανεῖσθαι συναπολάμπουσαν τῷ χρυσῷ καὶ τοῦ ποδὸς τὸ μὴ εὐπερίγραφον λήσειν ὑπὸ χρυσῷ σανδάλῳ καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτὸ ἐρασμιώτερον γενήσεσθαι τῷ φαεινοτάτῳ συνορώμενον. ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖναι μὲν οὕτως: ἡ δέ γε σώφρων χρυσῷ μὲν τὰ ἀρκοῦντα καὶ μόνον τὰ ἀναγκαῖα προσχρῆται, τὸ δ᾽ αὐτῆς κάλλος οὐκ ἂν αἰσχύνοιτο, οἶμαι, καὶ γυμνὴ δεικνύουσα.' Lucian 1913-67, vol. 1 (1913), p. 184-185, no. 7 (translation: A. M. Harmon).

Marani pointed out that Cecilia wears the jewels that Lucian listed, a necklace and a ribbon to gather her hair.[135] The similarities, however, are not as precise as he suggested, for Cecilia does not wear rings on her fingers or earrings. According to Marani, there are several ways in which Leonardo could have become acquainted with Lucian's *Essay on the House*. He may have been introduced to the text through Alberti, who refers to Lucian in his treatise on painting when he recalls the story of Apelles and Calumny, or through another writer. Leonardo may even have owned a copy of the essay himself. A list that he drew up of the books in his possession still survives and includes a 'Luchano'.[136]

As Alberti remarked in the *Libri della famiglia*, there is more than one Roman author who favoured female beauty without adornment and it is very well possible that Leonardo and the humanists around him were inspired by several ancient texts. There is a second text by Lucian, however, that in any case seems to be a far more likely source than the *Essay on the House* as suggested by Marani. In his *Eikones*, discussed above as a major source for the *paragone* debate, Lucian proposed the same argument. After Lycinus has praised the beauty of the woman he encountered, Polystratus comments that he has praised only her physical appearance and not her character, 'as if one were to admire her clothing rather than her person,' he explains. He continues: 'Perfect beauty, to my mind, is when there is a union of spiritual excellence and physical loveliness.'[137] He elaborates the argument, stating:

> Beauty, then, is not enough unless it is set off with its just enhancements, by which I mean not purple raiment and necklaces, but those I have already mentioned – virtue, self-control, goodness, kindliness, and everything else that is included in the definition of virtue.[138]

According to Lucian, a truly beautiful woman is virtuous and has no need for the further enhancement of superfluous jewellery. The sartorial argument is thus intrinsically part of *paragone* debate from the very start.

Besides in rhetoric and art theory, plain beauty was a theme that appeared in vernacular Italian poetry as well. In *canto* XV of the *Paradiso*, Dante recalls the Florentine customs in the old days, when greed had not yet caught hold of women:

> Florence, within the ancient boundary / From which she taketh still her tierce and nones, / Abode in quiet, temperate and chaste. // No golden chain she had, nor coronal, / Nor ladies shod with sandal shoon, nor girdle / That caught the eye more than the person did.[139]

In these lines, Dante not only connected modest dress with virtue, but he also made the statement that Leonardo would use as well in the *Trattato della pittura*: a woman should not wear ornaments that outshine her person.

---

[135] Marani 1999, p. 172.
[136] Marani 1999, p. 172-173, see also p. 203, note 45. The list of Leonardo's books is published in: Reti 1968, p. 81, no. 36.
[137] 'ἄξια γὰρ προκεκρίσθαι ταῦτα τοῦ σώματος ἐπεὶ ἄλογον ἂν εἴη καὶ γελοῖον, ὥσπερ εἴ τις τὴν ἐσθῆτα πρὸ τοῦ σώματος θαυμάζοι. τὸ δ' ἐντελὲς κάλλος, οἶμαι, τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὁπόταν εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ συνδράμῃ ψυχῆς ἀρετὴ καὶ εὐμορφία σώματος.' Lucian 1913-67, p. 276-277, vol. 4 (1925), no. 11 (translation: A. M. Harmon).
[138] 'Οὐ τοίνυν ἀπόχρη τὸ κάλλος, εἰ μὴ κεκόσμηται τοῖς δικαίοις κοσμήμασι, λέγω δὴ οὐκ ἐσθῆτι ἀλουργεῖ καὶ ὅρμοις, ἀλλ᾽ οἷς προεῖπον ἐκείνοις, ἀρετῇ καὶ σωφροσύνῃ καὶ ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁπόσα ταύτης ὅρος ἐστίν.' Lucian 1913-67, no. 11, vol. 4 (1925), p. 278-279 (translation: A. M. Harmon).
[139] 'Fiorenza dentro da la cerchia antica, / ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e nona, / si stava in pace, sobria e pudica. // Non avea catenella, non corona, / non gonne contigiate, non cintura / che fosse a veder più che la persona.' Paradiso, XV, 97-102. Translation: Alighieri 1867, p. 541.

Petrarch elaborated on the subject as well. Sonnet 263 in the *Canzoniere* perhaps comes closer to Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* than any other literary source (app. 5C). The poet starts with the exclamation that the 'victorious triumphal tree, the honour of emperors and of poets' has made his days both joyful and sorrowful. The tree is of course the laurel (*lauro*), denoting Petrarch's beloved Laura in the same way as the juniper (*ginepro*) serves as a pun on Ginevra's name. In the second verse the poet addresses Laura directly, stating that she is more honourable than anyone else and therefore immune to the traps of love. The last strophes elaborate on Laura's virtue:

Nobility of blood and the other things / prized among us, pearls and rubies and gold, / like a vile burden, you equally despise. // Your high beauty, which has no equal in the world, / is painful to you except insofar as it seems / to adorn and set off your lovely treasure of chastity.

Petrarch underlines Laura's disapproval of earthly splendour. She looks down on riches such as gems and gold and her own physical beauty is only acceptable to her because it is the outer sign of her inner virtue. Both obverse and reverse of Ginevra's portrait are explained through the sonnet. Like Laura, Ginevra is virtuously dressed without the otherwise prevalent pearls, rubies and gold, while the inscription 'VIRTUTEM FORMA DECORAT' added later to the reverse of the panel is an apt summary of Petrarch's last lines.

Ginevra's plain dress, whether it was Bernardo Bembo or perhaps Leonardo himself who instigated the idea, was motivated by principles of art theory and rooted in ideas on female beauty as expressed by antique writers and Tuscan poets writing in the vernacular. Ginevra's portrait is quintessentially part of the *paragone* debate as it evolved in humanist circles at the time. Her unadorned attire serves to emphasize her beauty and the virtues of her character. Inspired by Dante, Petrarch and harking back to ancient writers, most notably Cicero and Lucian, a new paradigm of representing female beauty in portraiture had emerged.

5. Dress in Florentine portraiture after *Ginevra de' Benci*

This chapter has dealt with the question why Ginevra de' Benci is depicted in plain dress. Flemish portraiture has been explored as a possible source, but a more likely and potent one is sculpture. Leonardo was profoundly influenced by sculpted portrait busts of women, which also often lack ornamented fabrics and jewellery. As a painter he was not only influenced by sculpture, but he even tried to outdo the latter art form. Rivalling the sculptor and the poet, he demonstrated that painting was better equipped to convey both inner and outer beauty than the other arts. It is generally recognized that Ginevra's portrait should be seen in the light of the *paragone* tradition. Since the idea that a plainly dressed woman is more beautiful than one decked out in finery was already present in Lucian's early writings on the *paragone*, and was reiterated in the vernacular poetry of Dante and Petrarch, we should now regard Ginevra's dress as a means to underline both her physical and spiritual beauty.

After c. 1480 female portraits depicting soberly dressed sitters became commonplace in Florence. It is not clear what exactly led to this trend, or whether, for instance, Leonardo's portrait of Ginevra influenced the trend. Jennifer Craven was inclined to relate the change in representational taste to the sumptuary law of 1472. Up until that time lawmakers had granted women more luxury with every new law. In 1472 this increasing leniency came to a sudden halt when a much stricter law was issued. To mention just one of its more stringent articles, all women were forbidden to wear jewellery, pearls and gold or silver ornaments, except for three rings and one brooch. According to Craven, these new sumptuary ethics inspired the new mode

of portraiture in the 1470s and continued to exert their influence throughout the 1480s, when they were reinforced.[140]

However, a closer understanding of how sumptuary legislation functioned, makes Craven's suggestion unlikely. It is a known fact that the enforcement of these laws was rarely effective. Moreover, the higher classes, which were the ones who had their portraits painted, were often exempted. In fact, a preliminary chronological consideration of trousseaux suggests an accumulation of wealth resulting in an increase rather than a decrease of the number of garments in general, and luxurious dress in particular in the course of the fifteenth century.[141] In the same period dowries were rising as well. In his study on marriage alliances Anthony Molho has described this process as the 'aristocratization' of the Florentine elite, resulting in a more luxurious lifestyle. He regards the sumptuary law of 1472 as a vain attempt of the Florentine legislators to put this development to a stop.[142]

The plain attire with which Florentine women were represented in their portraits in the last quarter of the fifteenth century seems at odds with the actual increase in ownership of luxurious dress. It is striking, however, that all portrait painters who represented their sitters in plain dress, such as Botticelli and Lorenzo di Credi, are in one way or another associated with the Verrocchio studio. A rare exception of a lavishly attired sitter can be found in the oeuvre of Domenico Ghirlandaio. Whereas the other female portraits ascribed to him fit in the austerely attired mode of portraiture, his posthumous portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi (1468-1488) shows magnificent dress and jewellery and depicts the sitter in profile view (fig. 61). Giovanna married Lorenzo Tornabuoni (1468-1497) in 1486. She bore him a child, Giovannino, in 1487 and died during her second pregnancy in 1488.[143]

Giovanna is portrayed with a *giornea* showing a pointed diamond surrounded by flames, a device of the Tornabuoni family, and a double 'L' on her shoulder, referring to her husband Lorenzo.[144] Some scholars identified the fabric as gold brocade, but Rembrandt Duits suggested

---

[140] Craven 1997, p. 190-198. On the 1472 sumptuary law and the underlying reasons for the stricter attitude of the *signoria*, see: Rainey 1985, p. 535-560. The law was published by: Mazzi 1908a, p. 48-52.

[141] Available inventories of *donora* show that the number of garments steadily increased in the course of the century. Caterina Corsini received two overgarments and one dress for her marriage to Nicholò di Branchazio Rucellai in 1419, just like her sister Tita six years later for her marriage to Bartolomeo di Lucha Rinieri in 1425 (see: Petrucci 1965, p. 109-110, 124). In 1449 five overgarments and one dress are listed in Bartolomea Dietisalvi's trousseau (see app. 3B, nos. 18-23). Ginevra d'Ugolino Martelli's trousseau of 1461 counted four overgarments and three dresses, while her dowry was settled at 1,400 florins (Rinuccini 1840, p. 255). In 1466 Salvestra di Domenico Pagni, whose family was less wealthy, received one overgarment and two dresses (see: Landucci 1985, p. 6). That same year, Nannina de' Medici's exceptionally rich trousseau counted four overgarments and six dresses with a dowry of 2,500 florins (see app. 3C, nos. 2-11). By the 1480s, that number had become the standard, even for girls with smaller dowries. Antonio Gondi, for instance, married off four of his daughters in the 1480s. They all received ten garments made of luxury fabrics such as brocaded damask and *alessandrino* dyed velvet, with a dowry of 1,500 or 1,700 florins (ASF, Carte Gondi, cassetta 271, 44, fols. 67-70, 73-76). Of course this small number of inventories is not a statistically reliable sample. However, other research confirms this trend. On the basis of a larger number of sources, Polidori Calamandrei noted an increase of the number of *camicie* in the fifteenth century, whereas Baldi distinguished a trend of increasingly expensive and luxurious *gamurre* in the first half of the century. See: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 101; Baldi 2006, p. 298.

[142] Molho 1994, p. 299-308.

[143] On the lives of Giovanna and Lorenzo, see: Van der Sman 2009; summarized in: Van der Sman 2010b, p. 17-30.

[144] Simons 1985, vol. 1, p. 145. In the Tornabuoni chapel Giovanna is portrayed at full length wearing the same garments, showing more devices on the lower part of her *giornea*, including two concentric circles surrounded by sunbeams, a device that is unanimously regarded as the Albizzi coat of arms, and an eagle

is more likely to be voided velvet with a yellow satin ground, since there are no indications of gold thread.[145] However, there is no indication of a velvet pile either, which means the *giornea* might be made of another type of luxury silk fabric, such as yellow and white damask. Whatever the case, if Ghirlandaio depicted an existing garment, it must have been woven especially for the Tornabuoni family, and thus extremely expensive and, above all, rare. Dress that was decorated with devices all over rather than on the sleeves only was exceptional in Florence.[146] Giovanna also wears a conspicuous pendant with a diamond and a ruby mounted in gold with three suspended pearls. A remarkably similar pendant, appraised at 100 florins, is mentioned in a notarial document of 1493 regarding the wedding gifts of Giovanna's sister-in-law Ludovica Tornabuoni.[147] Giovanna's likeness probably shows her wearing this costly Tornabuoni jewel, which was passed on to Ludovica after her death.[148]

Like Leonardo's portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, Giovanna's portrait bears an inscription that relates to the sitter's beauty and virtue. A *cartellino* in the niche behind Giovanna reads: 'ARS UTINAM MORES ANIMUMQUE EFFINGERE POSSES / PULCHRIOR IN TERRIS NULLA TABELLA FORET / MCCCCLXXXVIII' (Art, if only you were able to portray character and soul / no painting on earth would be more beautiful / 1488).[149] Reminding the beholder that inner virtue is a woman's true beauty, no matter how pretty she is on the outside, this text is a variation of Ginevra's 'beauty adorns virtue' and stems from the same tradition (fig. 2). But whereas Leonardo used plain dress to underline Ginevra's beauty and to express her virtues, Ghirlandaio used the opposite pictorial, or rather sartorial, strategy. Giovanna's opulent dress and jewels are meant to reflect her status and her beauty as much as her virtue.

Giovanna's portrait is not only exceptional because of the lavishness of its dress, but also because it returns to the formula of the profile portrait that had gone out of use in Florence by that time. The combination of the profile format with lavish dress, decorated with family

---

that has evoked a wide divergence of interpretations. It has been interpreted as a Medici device (Washington 2001, p. 127), the symbol of the Calimala guild (Schmid 2002, p. 122) and as a recurrence of a pattern used earlier by the Castellani family (Frick 2002, p. 210-214). Giovanna's sister-in-law Ludovica Tornabuoni is depicted in the fresco cycle as well, wearing a *cioppa* of exactly the same fabric (fig 33).

[145] Duits 2008, p. 182-183.

[146] For Florentine examples of devices on sleeves, see: Welch 2000, p. 104. Garments that were made entirely of textiles decorated with devices were usually limited to a courtly context. An example of two *camore* of gold tissue with a Sforza device for Beatrice and Isabella d'Este is described in chapter 3, p. 85-86.

[147] 'Unaltro pendente chon uno rubino chagnuolo uno punto in mezzo, uno diamante tavola tre perlle fine bianche benfatte anno un pocho e lungho e una unpocho rognosa pesano cho piccuoli doro charati dicaiasette chon uno rovescio, una foglia smaltata, di quarzo e biancho comunis extimationis etpretij florenorum centum largorum', cited from: Van der Sman 2009, p. 196-197, note 15, see also p. 112. The pendant was also mentioned in the will of Giovanni Tornabuoni, Ludovica's father. See: Simons 2011-12, p. 126. The will is published by: Cadogan 2000, p. 369-372.

[148] Gert Jan van der Sman rightly stressed that we are in the dark about whether painters were given the opportunity to portray actual pieces of precious jewellery or whether they depicted variations on standard shapes, possibly from workshops props or design drawings, while it is also possible that both practices were in use. Van der Sman 2010a, p. 53-54. On the use of workshop props, see also chapter 1, p. 33-35.

[149] Translation cited from: DePrano 2008, p. 618-619. The inscription is a minor variation on the last lines of an epigram by Martial, that read: 'ars utinam mores animumque effingere posset /pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret' (If art were only able to portray character and soul / no painting on earth would be more beautiful). There is some discussion as to who proposed the text, either Ghirlandaio (Shearman 1995, p. 112; followed by David Alan Brown in: Washington 2001, p. 193) or Poliziano, possibly assisted by Lorenzo Tornabuoni (DePrano 2008, p. 632-641; followed by: Marchand 2012, p. 115). The date of 1488 refers to the year of Giovanna's death rather than the year of execution, since the portrait was painted after the completion of her portrait in the fresco cycle in the Tornabuoni chapel in 1489-1490. See: Pope-Hennessy 1966, p. 24.

devices all over, and conspicuous jewellery is in fact typical of court portraiture. Ambrogio de' Predis' profile portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, clad in dress and jewellery showing Sforza devices, is a case in point (fig. 62).[150] The choice for the profile formula with opulent dress was certainly well reasoned. Gert Jan van der Sman has pointed out that the Tornabuoni deliberately presented themselves as nobility.[151] The question to what extent Giovanna's portrait can be interpreted as a visual example of what Molho has labelled the aristocratization of the Florentine elite is beyond the scope of my analysis. Also, more work has yet to be done on Florentine inventories of the final decades of the Quattrocento in order to reveal the actual wealth of women's wardrobes. Dress in Florentine portraiture in the last two decades of the fifteenth century in general and in the portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi in particular are compelling subjects for further research.

By the time Giovanna was portrayed, Leonardo had already left Florence to seek his fortune in Milan. Under the aegis of the Milanese court he would further develop his theories on the depiction of garments and drapery in painting and at the same time perfect his technical skills to render fabrics and pleats naturalistically. The restorer David Bull rightly characterized the depiction of Ginevra's dress as simple and almost naive. The young Leonardo was not yet capable of creating the sense of a living being inhabiting the dress, nor of a clear distinction between flesh and fabric.[152] The next chapter considers the sartorial choices in Leonardo's Milanese portraits in comparison to those in the work of local portrait painters and examines the development of the depiction of dress within Leonardo's oeuvre.

[150] Dress in Bianca Maria Sforza's portrait is discussed in chapter 3, p. 88-89.
[151] Van der Sman 2009, p. 16.
[152] Bull 1992, p. 70. It should be added that the offset of Leonardo's interest in drapery is already apparent in the depiction of the folds of Ginevra's black stole.

3. Dress in the Milanese portraits

In the early 1480s Leonardo left Florence for Milan.[1] By that time major renewals, such as the three-quarter pose and a preference for plain dress, had begun to find their way into Florentine portraits of women, as discussed in the previous chapter. By contrast, the small number of Milanese portraits still in existence are much more traditional. The use of sumptuous clothing and lavish jewellery to express status, in court ceremony as well as in portraiture, was more important at the court of Milan than in republican Florence. The portraits of Duke Francesco Sforza (1401-1466) and his wife Bianca Maria Visconti (d. 1468) are a case in point (figs. 63-64).[2] The duke and duchess are depicted wearing expensive dress and are shown in profile, which was considered more dignified and therefore more appropriate for nobility. Even as late as the 1490s, when Leonardo had been working in Milan for more than a decade, the few surviving portraits show that the Milanese upper class, men as well as women, were still being portrayed in profile view. The best known example is the likeness of Francesco Sforza's granddaughter, Bianca Maria Sforza (1472-1510), which was presumably painted shortly before her marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I (1459-1519) in 1493 (fig. 62). The hieratic pose and the preference for elaborate costume had remained the standard in court portraiture.

Leonardo's two Milanese female portraits, the *Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière*, respectively painted shortly before and shortly after the likeness of Bianca Maria Sforza, are strikingly different from the usual court portrait (figs. 3-4).[3] Both women are shown in three-quarter view and, although they are wearing some jewellery, their finery is not nearly as lavish as that seen in other Milanese portraits. Moreover, the valuable gold brocades favoured in the ducal household are completely absent. Although these portraits are less austere than the likeness of Ginevra de' Benci, Leonardo was obviously pursuing the notion of dress and beauty he had developed earlier in Florence. This chapter will focus on the contrast between these ideas and those underlying Milanese court portraiture.

Following a short overview of the critical history of the *Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière*, the importance of dressing up sumptuously at the Sforza court and the characteristics of Milanese fashion will be explained. Next the significance of dress in court portraiture will be addressed, after which a comparison will be made between Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine* and the portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza in relation to the trousseaux of the two sitters. Attention will be paid to the dating of the *Lady with an Ermine*, taking her dress as a reference point, and the possible meaning of her hairstyle. In addition, Leonardo's interest in the study of drapery and its

---

[1] Although the earliest evidence of Leonardo's presence in Milan is the contract for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, dated 25 April 1483, it is assumed he arrived somewhat earlier, probably in 1482. The latest evidence of Leonardo's presence in Florence is a payment for his altarpiece *The Adoration of the Magi*, dated 28 September 1481. See Pietro Marani in: DBI vol. 64 (2005), s.v. 'Leonardo da Vinci', p. 442.

[2] It is not certain whether these pendants were painted during the lifetime of the sitters or posthumously, see Andrea Bayer in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 253.

[3] There is a possibility Leonardo painted the portraits of Beatrice d'Este and Ludovico Sforza in Donato Montorfano's fresco of the *Crucifixion*, opposite Leonardo's *Last Supper* in the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Both Vasari and Lomazzo ascribe the portraits to Leonardo, a suggestion that is rejected by most modern scholars, except for Marani, who leaves the option open, see: Marani 1989, p. 90, cat. 17. Because the portraits were painted *al secco*, their condition is very bad, which means their authorship cannot be ascertained, nor can their dress be properly analysed. Therefore I have not included these portraits in this thesis.

importance for the development of his depiction of dress are exemplified. The dating of the dress of the *Belle Ferronnière* is also discussed and the question is raised what this might reveal about the sitter's identity. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the relationship between Leonardo's ideas on dress in painting on the one hand and in his personal life on the other.

1.1. Leonardo's patron Ludovico Sforza

During Leonardo's first stay in Milan, from the early 1480s to 1499, the city was politically and culturally dominated by Ludovico Sforza (1452-1508), known as 'Il Moro' (the Moor) due to his dark complexion. He had assumed power in 1479, acting on behalf of his underage nephew Gian Galeazzo Sforza (1469-1494), who remained the rightful Duke of Milan until his death.[4] It has been noted that the Sforza, and Ludovico in particular, used luxury arts as a means to legitimize their power. All over Italy the Milanese court was known for its lavishness. Ludovico gave many architectural commissions and hired artists like Bramante and Leonardo. In addition, he was a regular buyer of modern silver vases of considerable value. But above all, encouraged by his wife Beatrice d'Este (1475-1497) he spent huge sums of money on dress and jewellery.[5]

Ludovico married Beatrice d'Este, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, in 1491, having initially asked for the hand of her elder sister Isabella d'Este (1474-1539). Since Isabella was already betrothed to Francesco Gonzaga (1466-1519), Marquess of Mantua, he contented himself with Beatrice. The wedding had been scheduled for 1490, concurrently with that of Francesco and Isabella. Much to the annoyance of the Este, however, Ludovico kept postponing the ceremony. According to the Ferrarese ambassador Giacomo Trotti the cause of this problem was the Duke's mistress, Cecilia Gallerani (1473-after 1536), who lived with him in the *castello* and accompanied him everywhere. In a letter of 8 November 1490 Trotti described her as 'pregnant and beautiful as a flower'.[6] When at last his wedding to Beatrice took place in January 1491, it was celebrated with lavish festivities.[7]

In the meantime, Ludovico's aim was to acquire absolute and exclusive power. He realized this goal on 22 October 1494, two days after Gian Galeazzo's death, when he was officially recognized as 'Duke of Milan', supported by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. Until this investiture Ludovico and Beatrice d'Este carried the title 'Duke and Duchess of Bari'. From that moment on, Beatrice was the new Duchess of Milan, and the previous Duchess of Milan, Gian Galeazzo's widow Isabella of Aragon (1470-1524), received Beatrice's former status of Duchess of Bari.

In the early 1490s, after Ludovico had married and consolidated his authority, he became more interested in painting. Before that time, like his predecessors, he had preferred luxury arts. Only likenesses of the ducal family were regularly ordered by the Sforza court and in the 1480s Ambrogio de Predis, well-known for his portraits, was the sole painter mentioned as a member of the ducal household. Vincenzo Foppa was the only painter before him to enjoy the luxury of a paid position at the Sforza court. Still, each of them also received commissions from

---

[4] For an extensive biography of Ludovico Sforza, see Gino Benzoni in: DBI, vol. 66 (2007), s.v. 'Ludovico (Ludovico Maria) Sforza, detto il Moro, duca di Milano', p. 436-444. For Gian Galeazzo, see: Francesca M. Vaglienti in: DBI vol. 54 (2000), s.v. 'Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duca di Milano', p. 391-397. On Ludovico Sforza's rise to power, see: Black 2009, p. 82-84

[5] Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 766-768; Giordano 2011, p. 125-126.

[6] 'gravida et bella come un fiore', Giacomo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, Milan, 8 November 1490. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 467.

[7] Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 76-77.

a broader network in the city. This means that unlike smaller courts like those of Urbino and Ferrara, the Milanese court did not have painters in its exclusive service .[8]

Leonardo's situation was not exceptional. Shortly after his arrival, he started collaborating with the brothers Evangelista and Ambrogio de Predis.[9] Vasari's account that Leonardo was invited to come to Milan by Ludovico himself seems unlikely.[10] Leonardo tried to obtain a position at court by presenting the Duke with a letter in which he emphasized his qualities as a military engineer and, to a lesser extent, as a sculptor and painter.[11] We cannot be sure exactly when Leonardo received his first ducal commissions, or when he obtained a salaried position as a court artist. He may have been working for Ludovico from about 1485.[12] Nonetheless, the most important work by Leonardo and the De Predis brothers executed in the 1480s, the *Virgin of the Rocks*, was not a court commission (fig. 12). The altarpiece was ordered by the Franciscan Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception for their chapel, adjacent to the church of San Francesco Grande.[13] After the completion of this painting in 1484 or 1485, Leonardo seems to have been mainly engaged in designing war machinery.[14] It was not until about 1490 that Leonardo began receiving ducal commissions for paintings, including the likeness of Ludovico's mistress Cecilia Gallerani, known as the *Lady with an Ermine*, and the *Belle Ferronnière*, on a more regular basis (figs. 3-4).

1.2. Critical reception

The *Lady with an Ermine*, part of the Czartoryski collection since the early nineteenth century, has been unanimously accepted as by Leonardo since the 1920s (fig. 3).[15] The presence of the ermine led to the identification of the sitter as Ludovico's mistress Cecilia Gallerani, for the animal's Greek name, γαλέη (galée), alludes to her surname.[16] The earliest source confirming the

---

[8] Portrait painters who regularly received Sforza commissions earlier in the century were Bonifacio Bembo, Zanetto Bugatto and Baldassare da Reggio. See: Welch 1995, p. 247-249. Evidence of De Predis' presence at the ducal court is given by Motta 1893, p. 973, who cites a document that reveals Ambrogio de Predis, 'painter of Ludovico Sforza', received 10 *braccia* of blue satin from the ducal wardrobe in 1482, a common type of gift for painters and other artisans in court service.

[9] Syson suggested this may have been a calculated decision, because Ambrogio had already obtained a position at court. Syson 2011, p. 21.

[10] Vasari 1996, p. 631. Bernardo Vecchietti stated it had been Lorenzo de' Medici who sent Leonardo to Milan with a silver lyre as a diplomatic gift for the Duke. See: Von Fabriczy 1893, p. 87.

[11] Published in: Richter no. 1340.

[12] In 1485 Ludovico Sforza promised Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, to send him a picture by 'an excellent painter, to whom, having seen proof of his talent, we know no equal'. This suggests that Leonardo was already receiving commissions for paintings from the court by that date, although it is not known whether Matthias Corvinus ever received the promised painting. See: Syson 2011, p. 26.

[13] On the complex commission history of the altarpiece, see Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 164-175, cats. 31-34.

[14] Zöllner 2003, p. 118.

[15] First stated by Müller-Walde 1889, p. 52. For an overview of the opinions on the painting's authenticity before 1920, see: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 48-53.

[16] First proposed by the editor of the *Burlington Magazine*, Charles J. Holmes, in a footnote to the article of Hewett 1907, p. 310 and now generally acknowledged. See: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 53. The ermine was furthermore associated with purity and moderation, two important virtues for women. Leonardo himself noted about the animal: 'The ermine, in its moderation, eats only once a day and, in order to avoid sullying its purity, prefers to be caught by hunters rather than be dirtied.' On another sheet in the same notebook he wrote: 'Moderation restrains all vices. The ermine prefers to die rather than be dirtied.' H[1] fol. 12r; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 1234; H[1] fol. 48v; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 1263. First noted by Möller 1916, p. 319. According to Pedretti, the ermine may also refer to Ludovico, who was decorated with the Order of the Ermine in 1488 by King Ferrante of Naples. Pedretti 1990a, p. 171-172. Pedretti's suggestion was challenged by: Weppelman 2011, p. 74.

existence of Cecilia's portrait is a sonnet by the court poet Bernardo Bellincioni, celebrating her beauty and the portrait's lifelike quality (app. 5D). Bellincioni died in 1492, which means the picture was completed before that time.[17] By stating that Nature should thank Ludovico and Leonardo, who made sure Cecilia's beauty was captured for posterity, the poet moreover confirms that it was Ludovico who commissioned the portrait.

From the sitter's biography it can be deduced that the portrait dates from around 1490. Cecilia became the Duke's beloved early in 1489 and remained so until February 1491, shortly after Ludovico's marriage to Beatrice d'Este. On 3 May 1491, she bore the Duke a son, after which she continued to be a favoured guest at court.[18] After Beatrice objected to her presence, Cecilia was finally married off to Count Lodovico Bergamino of Cremona on 27 July 1492. Martin Kemp suggested the portrait may have been commissioned in 1491, as a wedding gift for Cecilia.[19] Correspondence between her and Isabella d'Este in 1498 confirms that Cecilia indeed owned the picture. As Luke Syson pointed out, however, the style of the portrait is close to Leonardo's first version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*, implying a slightly earlier date of 1489-1490.[20]

Notwithstanding the inscription 'LA BELE FERONIERE LEONARD D'AWINCI' in the upper left corner, Cecilia's portrait should not be confused with another portrait known as *La Belle Ferronnière*, currently in the Louvre (fig. 4). Technical research has shown that the inscription on the Cracow portrait was added at a later date, probably when it entered the collection of the Czartoryski Princes in the early nineteenth century. Another later addition is the black overpainting of the background, which used to be a shade of bluish-grey. A yellowed varnish further obscures the original colour palette. Some parts of the painting have been retouched, most notably Cecilia's lips, nose and hair, several beads of the necklace, the ribbons and the embroidered borders of the dress.[21]

Contrary to the *Lady with an Ermine*, Leonardo's authorship of the *Belle Ferronnière* was often doubted well into the twentieth century (fig. 4). Today there is general consensus that the picture is by his hand.[22] The identity of the sitter and the dating of the *Belle Ferronnière*, however, are still subject to debate. The existence of three Latin epigrams by Antonio Tebaldeo on one of the sheets of the *Codex Atlanticus*, dedicated to a portrait by Leonardo of Ludovico Sforza's mistress Lucrezia Crivelli, has prompted many art historians to regard the unknown lady as Lucrezia.[23] If the panel indeed represents Lucrezia Crivelli, a date between 1495, when she became Ludovico's mistress, and 1499 seems plausible.[24] However, besides these epigrams there is no other evidence to support this identification and it is quite possible the poems are dedicated to a portrait now lost.

Another likely candidate is Beatrice d'Este, Ludovico's wife. Although there are no written sources to confirm the existence of such a portrait, it is not unlikely that Ludovico

---

[17] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 49.
[18] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 55-58.
[19] Washington 1991, p. 272.
[20] London 2011, p. 112. On the basis of the assumption that Cecilia Gallerani was Ludovico's lover from as early as 1481 (which Shell and Sironi 1992 proved wrong), the portrait has at times been dated to the early 1480s. For an overview, see: Marani 1998, p. 81-82.
[21] Bull 1992, p. 76-78.
[22] On the attribution to Leonardo, see: Marani 1999, p. 182-187; Zöllner 2003, p. 99; London 2011, p. 123. In the past, the panel was often ascribed to Boltraffio. For an overview of all attributions, see: Marani 1999, p. 180-181.
[23] CA f. 456 (167 v.c), fully transcribed by Richter no. 1560. The reverse side of the folio is dated c. 1499-1500 by: Pedretti 1978-79, p. 214. The identification of the lady as Lucrezia Crivelli was first suggested by: Amoretti 1804, vol. 1, p. 39. It is still upheld by: Marani 1999, p. 178-180; Zöllner 2003, p. 99.
[24] London 2011, p. 123-124.

commissioned one of his spouse from his court painter. Several authors have justly noted the resemblance between this portrait and Beatrice's sculpted bust by Gian Cristoforo Romano (fig. 65).[25] To my mind, the sitter's face also resembles that of Beatrice's effigy by Cristoforo Solari (fig. 66). Béguin further refers to Pierre Dan, who described the portrait in 1642 in his *Trésor des merveilles de la maison royale de Fontainebleau* as a 'Duchess of Mantua'. Béguin argues this means that the portrait was still known to Dan as the likeness of an Este princess, although he must have confused the two Este sisters, Beatrice, Duchess of Milan, and Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua.[26] Assuming the portrait represents Beatrice, it is usually dated between 1495 and her death in 1497. Syson, tentatively opting for Beatrice as well, suggested an even earlier date of about 1493-1494 on stylistic grounds.[27] The sitter's dress may confirm this date, as is discussed below.

2.1. Sforza splendour

The poet Antonio Camelli (1436-1502), also known as Il Pistoia, wrote a series of sonnets on women from Siena, Florence, Ferrara and Milan.[28] According to him, Milanese women are notable for their lavish dress (app. 5E):

> Beautiful women in Milan, but too fat, / you know the talking, you know they are pale / slim in the middle, well fattened on the hips / they resemble the plumpest of capons. // They wear a certain type of *giornee* and *cioppe* / that makes them look fuller in the breasts / They go about wearily in low-heeled slippers, / moreover their cleavages are overfilled at the brims. // Their dresses of silk and rose-colour, / their golden head-dresses, on the breast a jewel,
> sleeves embroidered, or made of brocade. // On the shoulder a rich and beautiful balas ruby, / interlaced pearls around the neck, / with an engraved or nielloed pendant, / every finger wears a ring. /When you see them eating from their plates, / they all look like German shops.[29]

The poet ridicules the way women in Milan bedeck themselves with precious fabrics and ornaments as if they were displaying merchandize. The poem is of course intended as an ironical comment on dress and the description of the appearance of Milanese women is probably an exaggeration.[30] Nonetheless, at court, lavish costume was the order of the day and the descriptions of their dress and jewellery are a faithful reflection of Milanese court fashions.

The aforementioned portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti shows many items described by Il Pistoia in his poem, such as the golden headdress, the jewels on the breast and the shoulder, the strings of pearls and sleeves of gold brocade (fig. 64). Bianca Maria's extant inventory of jewellery reveals an enormous display of wealth and includes, among many other items, a brooch that is much like the one in her portrait, which consists of the figure of a lady holding a ruby encircled by four pearls and another gemstone below, mounted on a golden, leaf-shaped base. The jewel in the duchess's inventory of 1468 is described as a 'green angel that has a ruby in the front with a table cut balas ruby, and two pearls below with a point cut diamond, tied in

---

[25] Béguin 1983, p. 81; Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 145; London 2011, p. 126. A resemblance between the *Belle Ferronnière* and Beatrice's profile portrait in the Brera altarpiece was noted by: Gould 1975, p. 70.
[26] Béguin 1983, p. 81.
[27] Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 123.
[28] Cammelli 1908, p. 110-114, sonnets LXVII-LXX.
[29] Translation partially cited from: Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 31.
[30] Inventories of middle class Milanese women show most of their dresses were made of woollen cloth. The use of silk was mostly limited to sleeves and gold brocade was hardly worn at all. Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 728-729. For three fifteenth-century trousseaux of Milanese middle class women, see: Merkel 1893, p. 101-105.

an oak leaf'.[31] This kind of jewellery was extremely costly. In 1469 Galeazzo Sforza gave his bride Bona of Savoy (1449-1503) a brooch with a point-cut diamond, a balas ruby and two pearls, appraised at 15,000 ducats.[32]

The duchy of Milan was one of the richest city-states in Italy and the Visconti and Sforza rulers were famous for their ostentatious display of wealth. In January 1491, for example, the Ferrarese ambassador Trotti wrote to the Este that Il Moro had appeared in public wearing a gown with a sleeve embroidered with pearls, rubies and other jewels. This single sleeve had, according to Trotti, an estimated value of 50,000 ducats.[33] Recalling the splendour of the house of Sforza, the Milanese chronicler Bernardino Corio (1459-c. 1505) wrote in his *Patria Historia*, published in 1503: 'The court of our princes was very illustrious, full of new fashions, dresses and delights, and this illustrious state was established with so much glory, pomp and wealth that it seemed impossible to attain more power.'[34]

Ludovico's sister-in-law Isabella d'Este, who as marchioness of Mantua had far less spending power, was also impressed by the riches of the Sforza and exclaimed in a letter to her husband:

'Today I was shown the treasure that on previous occasions your Lordship has also seen but with the addition of two chests full of ducats and one of quarters, each perhaps two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half wide and just as high; would to God that we who spend willingly had as much.'[35]

As well as ostentatious, Ludovico was generous and he regularly presented Isabella with costly gifts. In 1495 Isabella's secretary Benedetto Capilupi described the gifts she had received during a visit to Milan in a letter to her husband: 'Sure enough, also this time [Ludovico] Sforza presented her with gifts: first, in January, two fat oxen that she sent to Mantua, next, in February, thirteen *braccia* of gold tissue made with the device of the dove'.[36] This type of fabric, literally 'loop-over-loop cloth of gold', was made of gold thread with little loops to create a pattern and was in fact the most expensive textile of the time. The heraldic decoration left no doubt about the identity of the giver, for the dove was an often-used Visconti-Sforza device.[37]

It was common practice at court to present sumptuous fabrics or garments as gifts. Just as Ludovico did, his predecessor Galeazzo Maria Sforza often bestowed precious clothing and textiles upon court members, including servants, friends and mistresses. Galeazzo's letters to

---

[31] 'angelo verde che ha uno rubino in fronte cum uno balasso in schosso in tavolla, perle due in basso cum uno diamante in poncta ligato in una foglia di rovere', Venturelli 1996a, p. 78.
[32] Venturelli 1996a, p. 78.
[33] Giordano 2008, p. 76-77.
[34] 'La corte de li nostri principi era illustrissima, piena di nuove fogge, abiti ed delicie, et questo illustro stato, era costituita in tanta gloria, pompa et richezza, che impossibile pareva più alto poter attingere.' Corio 1857, vol. 3, p. 456. On Corio and his history of Milan, see: Milan 2000, p. 94-95.
[35] 'Hozi ne ha mostrato el thesoro qual altre volte ha anche veduto la S.V., ma con gionta de due casse peine de ducati et una de quarti, che ponno essere lone dua braza e mezo l'una et largo uno e mezo et altrotanto alte; che Dio volesse che nui che spendiamo volunteri ne havessimo tanti!' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Milan 15 September 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 356. Translation cited from: James 2012, p. 331.
[36] 'Lo Sforza infatti anche questa volta le fece dei regali: prima, in gennaio, due bovi grassi, che ella mandò a Mantova, poi in febbraio tredici braccia di panno d'oro rizo sopra rizo facto a la divisa sua de la colombina', Bernardo Capilupi to Franceso Gonzaga, Milan, 28 February 1495. Luzio and Renier 1890c, p. 620.
[37] An altar frontal decorated with this device is now in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan (inv. no. 58). Surrounded by golden rays each dove holds a scroll with the words 'A BON DROIT' (justly). See: Milan 2009, p. 63-65.

Gotardo Panigarola, his chancellor responsible for keeping track of court finance, list many garments of crimson, murrey or blue satin and gold brocade.[38] In April 1474 he even ordered sixteen dresses and overgarments of silk damask and gold brocade at once for his mistress Lucia Marliani, the countess of Melzo.[39]

In Quattrocento thought, nobility simply could not do without riches and ostentation. The large sums of money that were spent by the ducal family on dress, ceremonial display and gifts all contributed to their *magnificenza*, or magnificence. Like outer beauty for a woman, splendour, as long as it fitted one's rank, was seen as a sign of inner virtue.[40] The humanist Giovanni Pontano explained it as follows in his treatise *De Splendore*:

> We call furnishings all domestic objects, such as vases, plates, linen, divans and other objects of this type without which it would not be possible to live pleasantly. Although men acquire these things for use and comfort, it is the obligation of the splendid man to regard not only use and comfort but to acquire as many of these objects as possible in such a way that friends and the knowledgeable, when it is necessary, can easily avail themselves of them, and to have them of the most excellent quality, with some superiority that is due either to the artistry, or to the material, or to both.[41]

2.2. Dressing the duchess

Besides other luxury arts, Ludovico spent enormous amounts of money on dress and jewels for his wife, Beatrice d'Este. Six months after the marriage had taken place, in January 1491, the Ferrarese ambassador, Giacomo Trotti, wrote: 'every day Lord Ludovico gives jewels and cloths of gold, especially made and very beautiful in superlative, to his wife'.[42] These gifts were often very expensive. For instance in February 1492 Beatrice wrote from the castle in Vigevano to her father Ercole d'Este about a diamond Ludovico had bought her:

> The other day my husband bought a diamond, in his own name [?] that cost him 12,000 ducats; you have to know that it is a big piece and he gave it to me; and I wanted to write to your Highness, because I know that it will give you pleasure and I am obliged to your Highness, because you are the cause of how well I am.[43]

---

[38] Herald 1981, p. 247 gives an overview of garments and cloth lengths from these letters.
[39] The letter is published in: Monnas 2009, p. 316.
[40] Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 23-24, 29-31; Belozerskaya 2002, p. 78-84. In this thesis, I have used the words 'magnificence', 'splendour' and 'luxury' indiscriminately. However, Catherine Kovesi recently pointed out that in the fifteenth century 'lusso' and 'lussuria' had a negative connotation, while 'magnificenza' and 'splendore' were used to denote honourable expenditure. See: Kovesi 2013, p. 236-242.
[41] Cited from: Welch 2002, p. 215.
[42] 'ogni die il Signor Ludovico fa donativi de zoglie et de drappi doro facti aposta, bellissimi in superativo, ala sua consorte'. Giacomo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, Pavia 12 July 1491. Cited from: Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 352.
[43] '…el mio consorte conprò l'altro dì un diamante, el qu[ale] li è costato dodese milia duchati et a nome desece; è l'un gran pezo che de diamante che se sapia et àmelo dato, et me è parso scriverlo ala Signoria Vostra, perché so la ne [prenderà] piasere, et del tuto son obligata ala Signoria [Vostra], p[erché] lei è causa de quanto bene ò.' Beatrice d'Este to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 7 February 1492. Ferrari 2008, p. 39. The phrase 'a nome desece' probably refers to the practice at many courts of making a distinction between the treasury and the sovereign's personal income, the privy purse. Although I have not found any specific references to the existence of privy purses at Italian courts, it was a common practice elsewhere in Europe.

Jewels with a value exceeding 10,000 ducats, like the diamond mentioned in this letter, were no exception at the Sforza court. A few months later, the physician Ludovico de' Carri was shown the Sforza treasure and wrote to Ercole d'Este:

Lord Ludovico has shown me jewels, so much and so beautiful that I do not believe that Cyrus or Darius had such and so much. This morning he gave one in our presence to the Duchess of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] with a value of 10,500 ducats.[44]

When visiting Venice in 1493 Beatrice flaunted two of the most famous Sforza jewels, the first being a balas ruby named 'el Spico' (the excellent), that has probably been depicted in the portrait of Gian Galeazzo by Piero Pollaiuolo, painted c. 1471 (fig. 67). In 1500, when Ludovico had to pawn a part of his jewellery collection to pay for his war debts, the stone was estimated at 25,000 ducats. The other jewel was il Marone' (the chestnut, probably named for its shape), which was pawned for 10,000 ducats.[45]

Apart from a collection of precious jewellery, Beatrice had an extensive wardrobe at her disposal. A letter from the Ferrarese courtier Bernardo Prosperi, who kept Beatrice's sister Isabella informed about all novelties concerning her hometown and relatives, provides an accurate image. He describes how their mother Eleanor was guided through Beatrice's wardrobe at Vigevano castle:

The other day Milady your mother was taken through your sister's wardrobe by Marcolo [the court jester], where all the garments are that her Highness has had made since she went to her husband, which number about eighty-four cloaks and dresses. It was further announced that she also has several others in Milan. Here it was like seeing a sacristy full of copes, as Milady said.[46]

Beatrice most likely already had a vast number of dresses from her trousseau, the account of which has been lost, unfortunately. Her sister Isabella needed no fewer than thirteen *cassoni* (painted chests) to carry her attire when she went to her husband in February 1490. For an alliance as important as that between Beatrice and Ludovico, de facto Lord of Milan, she must have been provided with a trousseau that was even more sumptuous than her sister's. Illustrative are the girdles worked in gold and silver, made by the Milanese goldsmith Fra Rocco, which the two sisters received prior to their marriages. Their father paid 600 ducats for Isabella's girdle and 2,000 ducats for Beatrice's.[47] Prosperi informs us that apart from wedding gifts like these, within the first two years of her marriage Beatrice had at least eighty-four new dresses and cloaks made, a huge number by fifteenth-century standards. Given the comparison with

---

[44] 'El Signore Ludovico me ha monstrato tante et cussi belle zoglie che non credeva che Cyro o Dario ne havesse tante e tale. Questa matina ne ha donato una in nostra presentia ala duchessa de Bari de pretio de ducati dece milia cinquecento.' Ludovico de'Carri to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 16 October 1492. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23 vol. 1, p. 356,.

[45] Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 356; Venturelli 2008, p. 157. Besides 'el spico' the variant 'spigo' also occurs, just as 'marone' is sometimes spelled as 'morone', in which case it might be allusion to the Duke's nickname 'Il Moro'. On dress and jewellery in Pollaiuolo's portrait of Gian Galeazzo, see: Venturelli 2000, p. 43, esp. note 18. The list of pawned jewels is published by: Trivulzio 1876, p. 531-534; Venturelli 1999, p. 157-158.

[46] 'L'altro heri madama voistra Madre fu conducta per Marcolo alla guardarobba de V. sorella, dove distese tucte le sue veste che sua Signoria se ha facto poi vene a Marito, che sono computate benrie et maglie circa 84. Secondo fo annunciato, dicevano che anche ne haveva dele altre a Milano. Qui pareva vedere una sacristia apparati di piviali, come la dixe Madama.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Vigevano, 6 March 1493. Portioli 1882, p. 333.

[47] Cartwright 1903, p. 14.

liturgical copes, which were usually made of gold brocade and garnished with expensive gold and silver embroidery, these garments must have been truly splendid.

Prosperi continues his letter to Isabella with a description of a dressing room Beatrice had furnished with innumerable perfumes and toilet waters, little crystal and enamel bottles designed in the fashion of Ludovico's collection of silver vases and twenty vials for powder worked in gold. A second room was equipped with more glass and porcelain vases, ivories and hunting equipment like dog's collars, purses and horns, so that it had the appearance of 'a fine shop'.[48]

Beatrice often exchanged designs for dress decorations or accessories with her mother Eleanor and sister Isabella, and even after her marriage her mother remained an important advisor in fashion matters. In April 1493 for instance, Eleanor sent her daughter an embroidery design for a *camora* (dress) made by her own embroiderer Jorba, to which Beatrice replied:

> Tonight I have received the design of the dress made by Jorba, which I like very much. And now that I have shown it to my embroiderer, as your Highness wrote me to do, he reminded me that if he has to make them in the same size from top to bottom, the flowers of the embroidery will be imperfect or askew from the top because the dress is of course narrower at the top than at the hem. But if he makes them narrower at the top, according to the width of the dress, the flowers will be intact and proportioned everywhere. I have not yet decided what to do, but I thought to write your Highness immediately now that I have consulted my embroiderer. Could you quickly advise me what you think, because I will do as your Highness advises.[49]

Like this example, many of Beatrice's letters still testify to her keen interest in fashion. After her untimely death at the age of twenty-one in 1497, a chronicler even described her as 'beautiful and dark, inventor of new dresses'.[50] This qualification is confirmed by Ludovico de' Carri, the physician who assisted her during her first pregnancy. After prescribing bed rest for the duchess, he wrote in a report on her medical condition to her father that she, while in bed, 'orders embroideries and corrects the designs in a way that the masters themselves are amazed'.[51] Ludovico il Moro, too, praised his wife for her ability to design costumes. In a letter to Isabella d'Este he recalled an unplanned party where all the ladies dressed up in Turkish dress 'of which fashion the inventor was my wife and she had it made in one night'.[52]

On the basis of these sources, many historians painted a picture of Beatrice, unlike her sister Isabella d'Este, as a woman without any interest in politics or intellectual endeavours,

---

[48] 'una bella bottega', Portioli 1882, p. 333-334.

[49] 'Ho ricevuto questa sera el desegno de la camora facto per lo Jorba, il quale mi è piaciuto assai. Et havendolo facto vedere al mio rechamatore, secondo che me scrive la Excellentia Vostra che volesse fare, epso me ha ricordato che, dovendolo fare in quello medesmo compasso da alto como da basso, gli accade in consideratione che li fioroni del rechamo andarano inperfecti o schavezi da alto, essendo rasonevolmente la camora più stretta de sopra che da bassa, ma che facendoli più stretta de sopra, secondo la larghezza della camora, li fioroni predicti sarano integri et proportionati in ogni parte. Io per questo non me sono resolta al tramente, ma me è parso arne subito notitia alla Excellentia Vostra ad ciò che, inteso questo ricordo del mio rachamatore, la me possi cum celerità avisare del parere suo, perché sono per fare quello che la predicta Excellentia Vostra e consigliarà che fatia.' Beatrice d'Este to Eleanor of Aragon, Milan 10 April 1493. Venturi 1885, p. 253; Ferrari 2008, p. 35-36.

[50] 'formosa ac nigri coloris, novarum vestium inventrix', cited from: Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 88.

[51] 'ordina recami corrigendo li designi, per modo che li maestrii proprii se ne maraveglian', Ludovico de' Carri to Ercole d'Este, Vigevano, 27 October 1492. Ferrari 2008, p. 46.

[52] 'De la quale fogia è stata lo auctore la p.ta mia consorte et l'ha facta tagliare in una nocte', Ludovico Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Pavia, 12 June 1491. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 114.

whose deepest concerns did not reach beyond fashion.[53] Castiglione, however, in the third part of his *Libro del cortegiano*, cites both Isabella and Beatrice as perfect exemplars of the court lady:

If you pass into Lombardy, you will find Isabella, Marchioness of Mantua, of whose most admirable virtues it would be offensive to speak as restrainedly as anyone must do here who would speak of her at all. I regret, too, that all of you did not know her sister, the Duchess Beatrice of Milan, in order that you might never again have occasion to marvel at a woman's abilities.[54]

Earlier in this part of the book, Castiglione had already explained the importance of women to court life:

'just as no court, however great, can have adornment or splendour or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies.'[55]

With her love for finery and luxury, Beatrice contributed to exactly the adornment and splendour that Castiglione thought indispensable.[56]

The important role for women in conveying splendour and magnificence can be beautifully illustrated with an episode preceding the state visit to Venice in 1493, in which the display of wealth at the Sforza court led to public rivalry between Beatrice and her mother Eleanor. The scene is described in two letters to Beatrice's sister Isabella. The first letter, written by Teodora Angeli, lady-in-waiting to Eleanor, testifies to the competition in dressing up their ladies that rose between mother and daughter, the latter supported by her husband Ludovico:

I already told your Highness about the chains of 200 ducats each that the duchess [Beatrice] had made for her ladies and the dresses are truly in order too. I heard that she gave two to Isabella and Margarita, to the first one of gold brocade, to the other one of crimson velvet that both used to be hers. Milady [Eleanor], wanting to show that she could do that too, had chains made of 220 ducats each on top of the others they used to wear intertwined. And because the duchess had given everyone certain strings of pearls with rosaries, Milady had them promptly made for her ladies, more beautiful and richer. And when Ludovico saw this he said: wife, I want you to make sure your ladies have pearls and that they are beautiful and considerably bigger.[57]

---

[53] See: DBI vol. 7 (1970), s.v. 'Beatrice d'Este, duchessa di Milano', p. 350-351.

[54] 'Se nella Lombardia verrete, v'occorerà la signora Isabella marchesa di Mantua, alle eccellentissime virtù della quale ingiuria si faria parlando così sobriamente, come saria forza in questo loco a chi pur volesse parlarne. Pesami ancora che tutti non abbiate conosciuta la duchessa Beatrice di Milano sua sorella, per non aver mai più a maravigliarvi di ingegno di donna.', Castiglione 1972, p. 242, Book III, 36. Translation: Castiglione 2002, p. 175.

[55] 'come corte alcuna, per grande che ella sia, non po aver ornamento o splendore in sé, né allegria senza donne, né cortegiano alcun essere aggraziato, piacevole o ardito, né far mai opera leggiadradi cavalleria, se non mosso della pratica e dall'amore e piacer di donne', Castiglione 1972, p. 210, Book III, 3. Translation: Castiglione 2002, p. 150.

[56] Compare also San Juan 1991, p. 70, who states: 'While cultural acumen and the cultivation of personal charm was required of most members of the court, regardless of rank or sex, Castiglione makes clear that only for women this was the primary occupation [...], whose physical presence was the focus of court ritual.'

[57] 'Già dixi a V.S. de le collane che faceva far la Duchessa a sue doncelle da duc. 200 l'una et cussì ha facto, et anche invero sono in ordine de veste. Intendo che ad Isabella ed Margarita ne ha dato due, ad una de brochato, a l'altra de velluto cremixino che era le sue. Madama, volendo demonstrar che scià fare anchora lei, ha facto cadene da duc. 220 ultra le altre che sogliono portare a treza. Et perchè la ducchessa havea facto anche a cadauna certi vezzi de perle cum paternostri, Madama ne fece subito fare anchora lei a

The same day Isabella's agent, Bernardo Prosperi, wrote to her that in his opinion Eleanor would probably win this contest of luxury in the end:

> Further Milady [Eleanor] gave some of her small pendants to our [company] and the duchess [Beatrice] could not surpass this; except that some of her maidens, that is Camilla and Cathelina Vismara and Isabella as well, did receive some little jewellery. But there is something else that makes me believe the duchess will be the loser […]. Milady has had dresses made of green satin with large strips of black velvet almost two fingers wide for all her ladies to wear in Venice; and she will bring more jewellery to hand to them when they are there. I do not think the duchess will have arranged for this.[58]

Prosperi, belonging to Eleanor's party and aware of the rivalry between Isabella and Beatrice, was probably not completely objective in his assessment of Eleanor's chances of outshining Beatrice. Even he had to admit Ludovico's spending power was impressive, finishing his letter with an account of the arrival of the goldsmith Caradosso with his merchandise: 'Caradosso has arrived here with a good deal of rubies and diamonds that he [Ludovico] bought to attach to the headdresses and I have heard it said that he spent 2,000 ducats.'[59]

In putting on this conspicuous display the competitors' primary intention was not to outdo one another, but rather to impress the Venetians. Ferrari pointed out that Beatrice was well aware of the political goals she could attain through ostentatious dress. She reported Ludovico from Venice that her sumptuous appearance commanded respect:

> I will not hold back from Your Excellency that, as we passed the crowds […] when we approached or left the palace of the Doge, everyone stopped to look at the jewels that I wore on my headgear and my dress with [the device of] the tower [of Genoa] and especially about the point-cut diamond one said to the other 'that is the wife of Signor Ludovico, look at the beautiful balas rubies and point-cut diamond she has!'.[60]

Splendour and lavish dress were no mere pastime for a young duchess; they were considered essential to court life and clearly served political purposes.

The Venetians were impressed by the Sforza display of wealth, but others were not. On 9 September 1494 the king of France, Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498), was solemnly received in Asti by Ludovico and Beatrice, who had invited him after the king of Naples, Alfonso II (r. 1494-

---

le sue, più belli et più ricchi. Et vedendo il Sr. Ludovico questo dixe: mogliere, volglio che anchora vui faciati che le vostre habiano de le perle et cussige ne fece de belle et più grosse assai.' Teodora Angeli to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[58] 'Madama dete poi certi pendenti de li soi piccoli a le nostre, et in questo la duchessa non ha potuto supplire; excepto che quelle sue spose, cioè Camilla et Cathelina Vismara et anche Isabella pur hanno havuto certi zoglieleti. Ma un'altra ce ne è anchora ch'io credo che la Duchessa starà perditrice […]. La ex. de madama ha facto tagliare mo a tute le sue, camore de raso verde cum liste large quasi due dita de velluto negro, le uale se haverano a vestire a Venetia; et porta altri zoglili da darli quando saranno lì, sì che credo che de quisti la Duchessa non se troverà provista.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[59] 'Mai si è ben arrivato qui Caradosso cum parecchij rubini et diamanti che l'ha comperato per alligar in panizole, et secundo me è decto gi ha speso ducati duemilla.' Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 24 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 374.

[60] 'Non tacerò già anche a la Excellentia Vostra che passando io […] per questo frequente populo, quando ascendevamo et descendevamo dal palazo del Signor Principe, che ognuno firmava la vista verso le gioye quale io haveva sopra l'ornamento de testa et la veste del porto et in spetie sopra la puncta del dyamante quale haveva nel pecto, cum dire l'uno verso l'altro: 'e xè la mugliere del Signor Ludovico, guarda che belli balassi et puncta de dyamante ha!', Beatrice d'Este to Ludovico Sforza, Venice, May 28 1493. Ferrari 2008, p. 157.

1495) laid a claim on Milan. A highly critical passage from the *Vergier d'honneur*, an account in verse of the French expedition to Naples composed by Octovien de Saint-Gelais and André de La Vigne, describes Beatrice's looks in acrid phrases:

With him [Ludovico] came his party / who was the daughter of the Duke of Ferrara: / completely or partly in fine cloth of gold / she dressed herself willingly every day. / Chains, necklaces, brooches, gems, / as is the common saying / she had so much of it that it was devilry. / In short, the tie was of higher value than the nosegay. / Around her neck rings, jewels, collars, / and for her richly adorned head / borders of gold, devices and brocades.[61]

By comparing Beatrice's attire to a tie that is richer than the flowers it holds together, the writers claim she was actually dressed up so lavishly, that she was outshone by her own finery.[62] Though the tactic may have been unsuccessful that time, it is another example of an attempt to impress another ruler with devices, gold brocade and sumptuous jewellery and shows the key role that splendour played at the Milanese court.

2.3. Milanese fashion

An anonymous French letter, with a more positive tone of voice than the *Vergier d'honneur*, provides more detailed information about Beatrice's dress during the reception for Charles VIII:

She wore a dress of green gold brocade, and a finely worked linen shirt, and her head was adorned with a great many pearls and the hair, hanging down behind, was taken together and bound with a silk ribbon, and a headdress of crimson silk that is nothing less than ours, with five or six grey and red feathers on it.

The next day, she appeared in another outfit that was equally impressive:

She was marvellously dressed in the fashion of her country, which was a dress of green satin, of which the bodice was covered with diamonds, pearls and rubies, both at the back and the front, and the sleeves very tight, all slit in such a way that the shirt appeared. The edges of the slits were fastened with a long ribbon of grey silk hanging almost down to the ground, and her bosom was completely bare and fully encircled with large pearls, with a ruby no smaller than our *grand valloy* […][63]

---

[61] Avecques luy fist venir sa partie / Qui de Ferrare fille du duc estoit: / De fin drap d'or en tout ou en partie
De jour en jour voulentiers se vestoit. / Chaînes, colliers, affiquetz, pierrerie / Ainsi qu'on dit en ung commun proverbe / Tant en avoit que c' estoit deablerie. / Brief mieulx valoit le lyen que le gerbe. / Autour du col bagues, joyaulx, carcans, / Et pour son chief de richesse estoffer / Bordures d'or, devises et brocans. Cited from: Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 394.

[62] There seems to have been a considerable difference in the degree of ostentatious display between the French and the Italian courts. On 14 January 1510, Jacopo d'Atri, the Mantuan ambassador in France, wrote to Isabella d'Este about a planned visit by the queen of France to Italy. He warned her that the French dressed far more restrainedly than the Italians, preferring dull black or tawny-coloured fabrics over brocades, because they thought more pomp to be excessive. He added that whenever a Frenchman praised Italian fashions, he only did so to flatter. The letter is published in: Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 466-468.

[63] 'elle [avait] une robbe de drap d'or verd, et une chemise de lin ouvrée pardessus, et estoit habillée de la teste grande force de perles, et les cheveux totillez et abbatus avec un ruban de soye pendant derriere, et un chapeau de soye cramoisy fait ny plus ni moins comme les nostres, avec cinq ous six plumes grises et rouges au dit chapeau. […] Elle estoit merveilleusement gorgiaise à la mode du pays, laquelle estoit une robbe de satin verd, don't le corps estoit chargé de diamans, de perles, et de rubis, et autant derriere que devant, et les manches bien forts estroitres, toutes descoupées en telle façon que la chemise paroissoit. Estoient ces coupes attachées avec un grand ruban de soye grise pendant presque jusque en terre, et avoit

Besides the usual report on Beatrice's impressive jewellery, this letter provides us with an accurate description of several features that were typical of Milanese fashion. The first is the distinctive hairstyle in which the hair is gathered and bound with a ribbon, known as the *coazzone*, that Beatrice wore on the first day of the reception. The Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence and Christ Church Picture Gallery in Oxford still keep two nearly identical portraits of Beatrice in which the *coazzone* can be seen (figs. 68-69).[64] Beatrice's hair covers her ears and is gathered at the back in a long ponytail, covered with a piece of fabric and bound with ribbons. On the back of her head is a golden hairnet, decorated with pearls and held in place by a ribbon that runs along the forehead, called a *lenza*.[65] Beatrice is also portrayed wearing this hairstyle in an altarpiece known as the *Pala Sforzesca*, now in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan (fig. 70).[66]

Beatrice's green satin dress, worn on the second day of the French visit, is comparable to the one she wears in the two portraits in Florence and Oxford (figs. 68-69). The dress in the portrait has the same narrow sleeves, slit all the way down so the white linen of her shirt appears. Instead of ribbons as described in the letter, featherlike clips hold the edges of the slits together in the portrait in Florence, whereas in the Oxford portrait the slits are joined together by jewels. The sleeves are attached to the bodice with ribbons, creating a decorative effect that is characteristic of Lombard fashion.

One of the most common types of women's dress in Milan in the 1490s was known as *camora*. The word *camora* is the northern spelling variant of the Tuscan *gamurra*. Although the two had the same cut, at the courts in northern Italy a *camora* was usually far more luxurious than the simple Florentine woollen *gamurra*.[67] *Camore* were suitable for even the most festive occasions, such as the wedding of Ludovico's niece Bianca Maria Sforza, when Isabella of Aragon wore 'a *camora* of crimson satin with cords of gold thread on top'.[68] Inventories show *camore* could also be made of gold brocade, like one of 'green loop-over-loop gold brocade with silver grapes' from Bianca Maria's trousseaux (app. 4C, no. 62), or another one of gold brocade on a green ground that belonged to Chiara Sforza (app. 4A, no. 152). Besides *camora*, the more general term *veste*, or dress, was also frequently used.

The trousseau of Cecilia Gallerani, Ludovico's mistress, lists two examples of a popular type of decoration for dresses in Northern Italy: 'a *camora alistata* of black velvet and green gold brocade, with as much velvet as brocade' and 'a *camora* of taffeta *alistata* in various colours' (app. 4B, nos. 16, 25), which means both dresses were decorated with strips of cloth to achieve a striped effect. In the Brera altarpiece Beatrice d' Este appears in a golden yellow gown with a similar decoration of black and blue strips (fig. 70). The neckline of her *camora* is decorated with gems and according to Lombard fashion the sleeves are attached to the bodice with ribbons.

A second decoration motif, which also appears in Cecilia's trousseau, is the *nodi* or *groppi* pattern (app. 4B, nos. 6, 19, 20, 22). It consisted of a pattern of interlaced cords. A portrait

---

la gorge toute nue, et à l'entour tout plein de perles bien fort grosses, avec un rubi qui n'est gueres moins grand que nostre grand valloy…'. Anonymous French letter to the Duchess of Bourbon. Cited from Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 395. The 'grand valloy' must have been a precious gem, owned by the French and named for the Valois dynasty.

[64] On the identification of the sitter as Beatrice and the date of the portraits, see the section entitled 'The portrayal of splendour' of this chapter, p. 86-87.

[65] For more examples of this hairstyle, see: Gnignera 2010, p. 169-179. Gnignera erroneously considers the portrait in the Uffizi to be a likeness of Barbara Pallavicino and dates it around 1510.

[66] On the commission, date of execution of the Brera altarpiece, and the identification of the child kneeling next to Beatrice as her son Francesco, see: Covini 2008, p. 91-109.

[67] Butazzi 1977, p. 19.

[68] 'una camora de raso cremesino cum cordoni d'oro filato sopra', Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan 29 December 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 386.

attributed to Ambrogio de Predis, currently in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, shows a woman wearing a mantle over the shoulder with a slit decorated with *groppi* embroidered in gold (fig. 71). Another name for the motif was *fantasia dei vinci*, which can be found in a letter by Beatrice to Isabella d'Este written in November 1493. Beatrice had to think about a new dress for Bianca Maria Sforza's wedding, but being in mourning for the death of her mother Eleanor, she did not feel up to designing it herself. She asked her sister's permission to use a motif invented by the poet Niccolò da Correggio (1450-1508):

Because I do not remember whether Your Ladyship has used that *fantasia* of the motif with the *vinci* that was proposed by Mr Nicolò da Coreggio when I was with Your Ladyship, and because I would have this invention made in heavy gold to put it on a *camora* of murrey velvet, if Your Ladyship has not used it yet, to wear on the day when the illustrious Bianca marries, for my illustrious husband wants the entire court to wear colour that day and to return to black afterwards, […] I have sent this cavalier, who will return with the speed of a courier from Your Ladyship, to whom I ask not to defer and to write me immediately whether you have or have not used this *fantasia*.[69]

Isabella replied promptly that Beatrice could 'satisfy her appetite' for using the design and Beatrice had her *camora* made, which she described in a letter about the wedding festivities of 29 December 1493 to Isabella:

I was wearing a *camora* of murrey velvet, with the hem of the motif with the *vinci* of pure gold, the outer borders enamelled in white and the *vinci* with green, as is logical, which are half an arm's length high, and I had the bodice in the same way on the front and the back, and the sleeves alike with the same motifs with the *vinci*, and the *camora* had several oblique [slits] lined with cloth of gold, and I had a rope of Saint Francis on it made of large pearls, and at the end, where the button is located, I had a beautiful balas ruby without setting.[70]

The *fantasia dei vinci* motif was probably invented as an *impresa* for Isabella. Kemp explains the term 'vinci' as a word play, for it could mean 'osier', a kind of willow branch used to make baskets with the same interlaced pattern, as well as 'you win'.[71] Pedretti provides a different explanation. He believes the 'vinci' represent the bonds of love, referring to the *Divina*

[69] 'Non havendo io a memoria se la S.V. ha facto qualla fantaxia del passo cum li vincij, quale fu proposta per m. Nicolò da Corigi essendo io cum la S.V., et perchè io faria epsa fantasia d'oro masizo per reponerla sopra una camora de velluto morello, quando fosse che la S.V. non l'avesse facta, per portarla el giorno che se sposarà questa ill.ma Biancha, volendo lo ill.mo S. consorte mio che per quello giorno tutta questa corte vesti de collore et poi se torni el negro passato quello giorno, [...] et per questo ho expedito el presente cavallaro, quale vene cum la celerità de la staffetta da la S.V., la quale prego ad non tenirlo in tempo et scriverme subito se ley habia o si o no facto questa tale fantasia.' Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 12 November 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 382-383. It is not clear what is precisely meant with 'passo'. Here translated as 'motif', it is a word commonly used for 'step' or as an indication of a certain distance.

[70] 'io teneva indosso una camora de velluto morello, cum la balzana del passo cum li vincij d'oro masizo, smaltato la mesura de bianco et li vincij de verde, come vole la raxone, quali sono de altezza mezo brazo, medesimamente haveva a li busti de dreto et denanti, et cossi a li maneghini d'epsi passi cum li vincij, et la camora era cum alchuni sguinzi fodrata de tela d'oro, et haveva sopra uno cordone de S.to Francisco de perle grosse, et in fondo, in loco del botone, haveva uno bello balasso senza foglia.' Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 29 December 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 386. For Isabella's reply to Beatrice regarding the permission for the use of the motif, dated 13 November 1493, see: Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 383.

[71] Kemp 1981, p. 187.

Commedia, where Dante writes: 'So much enamoured I became therewith, / That until then there was not anything / That e'er had fettered me with such sweet bonds (*vinci*)'.[72]

An even more sumptuously decorated dress owned by Beatrice is described by Prosperi in the same letter in which he comments on her huge wardrobe of eighty-four pieces. The dress was made of horizontal strips of cloth of gold and crimson velvet. These velvet parts were decorated with an 'almond shaped *zellosia* [lattice?] of silver thread, and where the *zollesia* [lattice?] reached the edge of the velvet, the silver threads were left hanging loose over the strips of cloth of gold, in such a way that it was very graceful'.[73] He adds that she wore the dress on the Sunday before carnival. Rosita Levi Pisetzky identified this dress as the one depicted in Beatrice's tomb by Cristoforo Solari. This dress shows the described decoration of chequered intertwined threads, ending up in tassels (fig. 66).[74]

A similar trimming was applied to the dress in the portrait of an unknown lady attributed to Bernardino de' Conti (fig. 72). The black dress is decorated with even rows of plaited fringing in gold and silver thread with alternating gold and silver pendant tassels. In her survey on lace Levey identifies the technique used to create these fringes as macramé.[75] Macramé is believed to have originated in Moorish Spain and spread through Europe from the late fifteenth century. It was a forerunner of lace, which was very costly and a true fashion novelty in the sixteenth century. Another very early reference to lace-like trimmings is recorded in a Sforza inventory of 1493: 'fringe of gold and black silk, made with bone [bobbins]'.[76] These rare examples of different types of 'pre-lace' show the interest at court for the latest luxury articles. Court fashion in Milan was not only richly adorned and expensive, but also highly exclusive.

A garment that was often combined with a beautifully decorated *camora* was the *sbernia*, a short mantle. A description written in 1494 can be found in the anonymous *Diario ferrarese*: 'And on their *camore* of silk, gold and silver, and of cloth, the women wear short mantles diagonally across the chest, slung over the shoulder in an apostolic manner, named *bernie*'.[77] This way of wearing the mantle can be seen in a miniature of the investiture of Ludovico as Duke of Milan in 1495 (fig. 73). The kneeling women in the foreground all wear *sbernie* in different colours draped over their right shoulder.[78] As can be observed in the aforementioned portrait attributed to De Predis and Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani the *sbernia* had a vertical slit to slide the right arm through, allowing greater range of movement.[79] Milanese inventories often list *sbernie*

---

[72] Pedretti 1990b, p. 83. 'Io m'innamorava tanto quinci / che 'n fino a li non fu altra cosa / che mi legasse con si dolci vinci'. Paradiso, XIV, 127-129. Translation: Alighieri 1867, p. 538.

[73] 'zellosia a mandoli d'argento filato, et poi quando bènalla fina della zollesia del velluto ze hanno lassato pendere quelle file d'argento lunge suso le liste della tela d'oro, in mò chel gè de grandissima gratia', Bernardo Prosperì to Isabella d'Este, Vigevano, 6 March 1493. Portioli 1882, p. 334. It is not clear how to precisely translate 'zellosia' and zollesia', but it must be a decoration consisting of knotted threads forming almond shapes.

[74] Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 428, 433.

[75] Levey 1983, p. 19.

[76] 'tarneta d'oro e seda negra, facta de ossi', Bruggeman 1997, p. 35; Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 211-112. For the inventory, see: Van Overloop 1934, p. 93-126, esp. no. 428.

[77] 'Et le donne suso le camore di seta, d'oro et d'argento, et di panno, […] portano li mantelli corti ad armacollo, buttandoli in spalla a la apostolica, chiamate bernie'. Cited from: Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 456. On the *sbernia*, see also Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 255.

[78] On dress in this miniature, see: Scott 2007, p. 166.

[79] The sitter of the portrait drawing on vellum, known as *La Bella Principessa* and recently attributed to Leonardo by Martin Kemp, wears a *sbernia* as well (fig. 8). On the attribution, see: Kemp and Cotte 2010. Kemp argued that the *nodi vinciani* motif around the slit is indicative of Leonardo's authorship. However, it should be noted that it was a popular motif at the time and could have been employed by any artist.

that were beautifully decorated, like the fifteen examples owned by Cecilia Gallerani with contrasting linings, edged borders or worked in gold and silver (app. 4B, nos. 1-15).

A sole example of a full-length portrait with a height of almost 1.4 metres, now in the National Gallery in London, shows a woman in profile view dressed in the Milanese fashion (fig. 74). Unfortunately, the picture is seriously damaged, but unlike most paintings from this period it is has never been retouched.[80] Moreover, the size of the portrait gives a unique opportunity to see her garments from top to toe. The identity of the sitter is unknown, although she some regard her as Bona of Savoy because of the resemblance between the portrait and her likeness on a medal. The picture has been roughly dated to the last quarter of the century and if it represents Bona, it was most likely painted when she was Regent of Milan, between 1476 and 1480. However, as Davies noted in the 1961 catalogue of the early Italian schools, her dress suggests a later date.[81] In fact, the portrait shows the height of fashion of the 1490s.

The sitter wears a red dress with a floral pattern edged with cloth of gold along the hem of the skirt. The fullness of the skirt, especially visible in the lower abdomen where the sitter rests her hand, is probably created by a *faldia*, an underskirt stiffened with horsehair or cotton, worn underneath the dress. *Faldie* were relatively new in the 1490s and were first worn in Spain about twenty years earlier. The earliest mention in Milan is of three 'faldilie' in a trousseau of 1492 for Ippolita Sforza (1481-1520), the niece of Duke Gian Galeazzo; they are listed as 'garments made in the Spanish style'.[82] A Milanese sumptuary law forbade the wearing of this new type of undergarment in 1498, which confirms its popularity.[83]

On top of her *camora* the lady wears a shorter, sleeveless mantle consisting of the typical *liste*, strips of various fabrics in golden yellow (possibly cloth of gold), red and white. This may be a *sbernia* or another type of short garment often cited in inventories as a *mantellina*. Her sleeve is decorated with *liste* in the same manner and is attached to the bodice with ribbons. The *camicia* has been pulled out through the opening at the shoulder and slits all the way down from shoulder to wrist. Her hair is arranged in a *coazzone* and besides the *lenza* the coiffure is decorated with strings of pearls.

In her hands, the sitter holds columbines along with a highly fashionable accessory known as a *zibellino*, the pelt of a furred animal, most often sable. The first mention of the use of a *zibellino* dates from 1489, when Isabella of Aragon, Duchess of Milan until 1494, was reported

---

Moreover, the motif is not confined to a strict border, as it is in works that are unquestionably Leonardo's, such as the portraits of Cecilia Gallerani and *Mona Lisa*, and the portrait in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana attributed to Ambrogio de Predis (figs. 3, 6, 71). It is extended at the top, which is unusual for fifteenth-century embroidery motifs in Milan, which are strictly repetitive in portraiture. More alarming is the *sbernia*'s slit, which does not run vertically to accommodate movements of the arm, but horizontally, and is thus dysfunctional. I know of no fifteenth-century depictions of *sbernie* with similar dysfunctional slits. Although Leonardo did make adjustments to his sitters' dress during his Milanese years, as is discussed below, he never altered the cut of garments substantially in ways that would change or inhibit their function. Obviously, the artist lacked a thorough understanding of late fifteenth-century Milanese dress. Therefore, unless this specific detail is a later addition, the *Bella Principessa* cannot possibly be by Leonardo and must have been executed at a much later date.

[80] As far as I know, this is the only full-length portrait from Italy dating to the fifteenth century. Both its size and the canvas support are extraordinary. Examination under UV fluorescence reveals no retouches whatsoever. I thank Caroline Campbell for kindly allowing me to inspect the painting in storage at the National Gallery in London and for discussing it with me there on 8 July 2014.

[81] Davies 1961, p. 374; Baker and Henry 1994, p. 344.

[82] Ippolita's trousseau for her marriage with Alessandro Bentivoglio was published by: Santoro 1953, p. 181-182. For more examples of *faldie* in Milanese inventories, see: Butazzi 1977, p. 24. On the *faldia* in Spanish fashion, see: Anderson 1979, p. 211-212.

[83] Verga 1898, p. 65-66.

to have worn one.[84] Dating from 1497, the marble effigy of Beatrice d'Este in Certosa di Pavia, holding a *zibellino* in her hands, is the oldest, firmly dated, visual record (fig. 66).[85] *Zibellini* were still very exclusive in the 1490s, which suggests the sitter of the National Gallery portrait was a notable lady of the Milanese court.

Another feature of Milanese court dress was the use of personal devices, or *imprese*, in jewellery and textiles. Paolo Giovio explained in his *Dialogo dell'imprese militari et amorose*, published posthumously in 1555, that the popularity of wearing *imprese* on garments started after the arrival of the French king Charles VIII in Italy in 1494, whose soldiers were all wearing livery with French devices.[86] However, there are many references attesting to their popularity well before that date. Although no actual garments survive from this period, many smaller pieces of gold brocaded silks and velvets that were made for the Milanese court are still extant. A brocaded velvet in the Victoria & Albert Museum is decorated with the device of burning branches, which represent the fire of love (fig. 75). Normally buckets of water, symbolizing moderation to tame the fire, are suspended from the branches. Here they are lost, probably because they were made of sequins separately sewn on. The device appears on several items of dress. For instance in 1474 Duke Galeazzo Maria bought 1.5 *braccia* of damask brocaded with lions and branches to make sleeves, probably for his mistress Lucia Marliani. Later, in 1518, Bona Sforza (1494-1557) would receive a black dress in her trousseau for her marriage to the King of Poland 'with trunks in gold drawn wires'.[87]

A very popular motif was the *sempervivum tectorum*, an evergreen succulent plant that grows in even the harshest conditions. Francesco Sforza took the sempervivum with the motto 'Mit Zeit' (with time) initially as an emblem to symbolize his persistence as a ruler. Later on it was also used to emphasize the continuation of the dynastic line.[88] The Metropolitan Museum of Art owns a piece of brocaded velvet with the sempervivum device (fig. 76). From the branches of the plant emerge, besides the distinctive sempervivum flowers in the centre, pine cones, pomegranates and quinces, the latter being another Sforza device.[89] The device also occurs in Bianca Maria Sforza's trousseau as a decoration on a sumptuous necklace, with six balas rubies, twenty-four diamonds, six emeralds and many large and small pearls, with a total value of 9,000 ducats (app. 4C, no. 1).

Other devices were inspired by more recent political events, like the *impresa del fanale*, depicting the lighthouse of Genoa. Ludovico started using the device after his conquest of the city. Isabella d'Este described it in a letter to her husband in September 1492:

Yesterday Signor Lodovico sent the Duchesses of Milan [Isabella of Aragon], of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] and me to look at some textiles in the house of a merchant. When we returned, he asked me which I considered the finest. I said to him it seemed to me a loop-over-loop gold tissue with some silver, embroidered with one of his devices, called *el fanale* [the lighthouse], which represents the port of Genoa

[84] Letter of Giacomo Trotti, 18 February 1489, see: Dina 1921, p. 301.
[85] Sherill 2006, p. 121-122. *Zibellini* are sometimes referred to as flea furs, a name that derives from the nineteenth-century myth that the fur would attract fleas, which it does not.
[86] Caldwell 2004, p. 7-8.
[87] Milan 2009, p. 94-95.
[88] Milan 2009, p. 78-79.
[89] 'Velvet fragment with Sempervivum tectorum motif (Milan), inv. 51.139.2a,b', in: *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/51.139.2a,b (accessed: January 2013). Several fragments of crimson pile-on-pile velvet in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (inv. no. 593-1884) show the same design. See: Milan 2009, p. 80, cat. 8.

consisting of two towers with a motto saying: *TAL TRABALIO MES PLASES PAR THAL THESAUROS NON PERDER* [I like fatigue if it brings a treasure].[90]

Isabella excitedly reported how Ludovico praised her for her excellent taste, revealing that he had already ordered a *camora* (dress) for Beatrice made of the same fabric. This dress was later described by Prosperi in a letter to Isabella, after Beatrice wore it on the occasion of an official entry in Ferrara:

> The duchess [Beatrice] wore a *camora* of crimson taffeta embroidered with the *porto del fanale*, and on each sleeve she had two towers and two more at her back, and on each tower there was big balas ruby: further on her head she wore a cap with very large pearls like the biggest of Milady [Eleanor of Aragon], with five other very beautiful balas rubies.[91]

Besides Isabella and Beatrice, Bianca Maria Sforza also received a *camora* made of this fabric. It is listed in her trousseau as 'a camora of loop-over-loop gold brocade on a murrey ground, with the device of the *fanale'* (app. 4C, no. 61). Isabella finished the letter of September 1492 to her husband with the announcement that Ludovico gave her 15 *braccia* of the desired fabric, at the cost of no less than 600 ducats, of which she immediately had a *camora* made of her own to wear before her departure. This is a clear example of the value of these embroidered and brocaded fabrics with heraldic imagery.

3. The portrayal of splendour

The portraits painted and sculpted at the court of Milan discussed so far render the dress and jewellery of their sitters rather faithfully. Local painters and sculptors carefully followed the taste at court and depicted their renowned patrons dressed up as they prescribed. In several cases, dress and jewellery in portraits can be exactly matched with archival sources. The examples cited above are the portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti depicting the angel-shaped jewel that is recorded in her inventory and the effigy of Beatrice d'Este showing a dress that is described in a letter by Bernardo Prosperi (figs. 64, 66).

The two identical portraits in Florence and Oxford make a similar case (figs. 68-69). In both portraits the sitter wears a pearl necklace with a pendant that consists of an emerald and a ruby, both in a gold setting, and a pear shaped pearl that has been tucked into her bodice. As early as 1889, Coceva, unaware of the existence of the Oxford version, identified the Uffizi portrait as Beatrice on the basis of the sitter's physical resemblance to Beatrice's portrait bust by Gian Cristoforo.[92] Byam Shaw found further proof of this identification in a letter by Beatrice's

---

[90] 'Heri il S. Ludovico mandò le Ducchesse di Milano, de Bari et me a vedere certi drappi a casa de uno mercadante. Quando fussimo ritornate, me dimandò qual me pareva più bello. Io gli dissi che 'l me pareva uno rizo soprarizo d'oro cum qualche arzento, lavorato ad una sua divisa che si dimanda el fanale, zoè el porto de Genua che sono due torre cum uno breve che dice: Tal trabalio mes plases par thal thesauros non perder'. Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Milan 20 September 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 357-358.

[91] 'La duchessa vestite una camora de tabbi cremexino rachamata al porto del fanale, et supra le maniche teniva due torre per cadauna et due altre nel pecto de dreto, a le quale torre uno gran balasso per cadauna; poi in capo havea una scoffia de perle grossissime come sone le più grosse de Madama, cum altri cinque balassi bellissimi.', Bernardo Prosperi to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara 21 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 373.

[92] Coceva 1889, p. 265. Coceva attributed the portrait to Lorenzo Costa and hypothesized it might have been one of the family portraits by Costa that Vasari saw in the *guardaroba* of the Este family.

mother Eleanor to Isabella d'Este, written in August 1490.[93] In this letter, Eleanor describes a necklace with a pendant that Beatrice received as a betrothal present from Ludovico, which shows a remarkable resemblance with the pendant in the portraits:

> Master Francesco da Casate, ambassador of the ill. Mr Ludovico has returned from Milan and has presented in his name to Milady the Duchess [Beatrice], your sister, a beautiful necklace with large pearls mounted in golden flowers and a beautiful jewel to attach to the said necklace, which contains a very beautiful, huge emerald and a balas ruby and a pearl in the form of a pear.[94]

The only difference between the two portraits on the one hand and the description in the letter on the other is the mount of the pearl necklace. In the portrait the golden flowers are absent. The necklace may have been changed or replaced, or more likely the painter did not have the costly jewel at his disposal in his workshop and had to work after a rough sketch in which minor details had been omitted. The similarities between the pendant depicted and the description are striking and confirm the sitter is Beatrice, wearing one of her engagement gifts.[95]

The examples show that Milanese portraitists conformed to the demands of court taste by faithfully rendering jewellery to a degree that facilitates the identification of the sitter. This is completely different from the situation in Florence, where the jewellery depicted is much more generic and the same jewel may reappear in portraits of different women. Since Milanese painters were not initially trained as goldsmiths like most of their Florentine counterparts, they would not have had workshop props or design drawings readily at their disposal in the workshop.[96] Moreover, as a member of the ducal household, a court painter was much more likely to have had access to costly pieces of jewellery than a painter receiving a single portrait commission from a Florentine citizen.

Because of the emphasis on the lifelike representation of dress and other finery, Milanese court portraiture can be seen as a means of conveying the same message of splendour and magnificence as dressing up did for public court ceremony. This is borne out by a passage from a treatise entitled *De Triumphis religione*, written in 1497 by the humanist Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti in honour of Beatrice's father Ercole I d'Este of Ferrara. One of the chapters deals with the virtue of magnificence. Sabadino takes the reader on an imaginary walk through

---

[93] Byam Shaw 1967, p. 92-93. Even after this publication, the portrait in the Galleria degli Uffizi is still often identified as Barbara Pallavicino, painted by Alessandro Araldi. Although Mina Gregori maintained this attribution in her 1994 catalogue, she acknowledged the portrait actually resembles other likenesses of Beatrice and the picture is stylistically closer to the Milanese *leonardeschi* than to Araldi, see: Gregori 1994, p. 149. McIver still identifies the sitter as Barbara Pallavicino. On the basis of the jewellery, she regards it as betrothal portrait, dating it to c. 1523, see: McIver 2008, p. 94-97. By that time, however, both the dress and hairstyle of the sitter were completely out of date.

[94] 'L'è ritornato da Milano il M.co M. Francescho da Casate, ambasciatore del Ill.mo S. Ludovico et ha presentato in nome di sua Ex. a M.a Duchessa vostra sorella una bella collana cum perle grosse ligate in fiori d'oro et un bello zoglielo da tachare a dicta collana, nel quale è uno bellissimo smiraldo de grande persona, et uno balasso et una perla in forma de pero.' Eleanor of Aragon to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara 31 August 1490. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 79-80.

[95] It should be noted that a portrait of an unknown woman, nowadays in the Liechtenstein Princely Collections, shows the sitter wearing a very similar pendant (Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GE 935). The portrait was attributed to Bernardino Zaganelli da Cotignola early in the twentieth century by Gustav Ludwig. Although the portrait was not included in the catalogue raisonné on the Zaganelli brothers (Zama 1994), the attribution is still upheld by Kräftner 2004, p. 137. However, several details of the sitter's costume and jewellery raise too many doubts for the portrait to be further considered here.

[96] The Florentine situation is discussed in chapter 1 in the section entitled 'Workshop practice', p. 33-35.

Ercole's palace, describing the virtuous display in each and every room along the way. In one of the ducal apartments he encounters a portrait showing:

> your illustrious Lordship naturalistically portrayed, wearing a golden chain, with a very rich jewelled pendant at the chest, and on the cap a very large and a deceptively realistic oriental daisy, and with a small garter of gems of exceptional value on the left leg, which is a device [the Order of the Garter] that was bestowed upon you by his Royal Highness of England, with your Majesty wearing in regal attire […][97]

He goes on to say that the Duke usually wore this attire on solemn occasions. Hence, Sabadino discusses the portrait as an example of magnificence, precisely because the Duke's dress denoted the same in real life.

It is important to realize that the value of a portrait itself is nowhere near that of the dress and jewellery depicted in it. Margaret Scott compared the cost of dress and art in fifteenth-century Italy and concluded that 'art cost less than clothing'.[98] Leonardo, for instance, appraised his own *Virgin of the Rocks* at 100 ducats, an amount that must have been considerable to the painter, but seems trivial when measured against the hundreds of thousands of ducats spent on dress, jewellery and textiles by the Milanese dukes (fig. 12). Gold brocade was in fact so expensive that only the church and princely courts could afford serious lengths of it.[99] With a value of 600 ducats the piece of brocade Ludovico acquired for Isabella d'Este was far more expensive than a large altarpiece like the *Virgin of the Rocks*, let alone a small portrait without costly pigments and gilding.

The difference in price and appreciation is also reflected in the artisan's wage. Rembrandt Duits calculated that a skilled Florentine brocade weaver, with an annual income of 160-170 florins, earned considerably more than a painter.[100] In Milan the situation was comparable to Florence. Few art historians realize that in monetary terms a famous artist like Leonardo was valued less than an accomplished embroiderer. Estimations of Leonardo's wage range from 50 to 100 ducats a year, whereas the embroiderer Jorba was offered 200 ducats.[101] Dress and jewellery were considered more important to court life than painting. In court portraiture, it is dress therefore that plays a leading part.

A striking example of a court portrait that is all about splendid dress and dynastic honour is the aforementioned likeness of Bianca Maria Sforza's (fig. 62). It was painted by Ambrogio de Predis around the time of her marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in 1493. A carnation tucked in her belt probably alludes to her betrothal.[102] For Ludovico Sforza, Bianca Maria's uncle, the alliance was of great political importance, for Maximilian was

---

[97] 'la tua illustrissima Signoria naturalmente depincta, torqueato d'oro, con richissima gema pendente al pecto et in la biretta grandissima e speciosissima margarita orientale et con una picola cintura de geme ala sinistra gamba de singulare valore, chiamata Impresa, dela quale fusti munificato dal Serenissimo Re de Anglia con una regale veste de sua Maiestate [...]', Gundersheimer 1972, p. 61-62. Ercole I received the Order of the Garter in 1481 from Edward IV.

[98] Scott 2007, p. 124-125.

[99] Edler de Roover 1966, p. 262.

[100] Duits 1999, p. 65-66.

[101] On Leonardo's appointment as a court painter and his wage, see: Zöllner 2003, p. 118. On Jorba, see: Ferrari 2008, p. 46.

[102] London 2011, p. 106. David Alan Brown suggests that the portrait was painted at the request of another suitor, the Duke of Saxony. In a letter to Ludovico Sforza, dated 1 September 1492, his courtier Marchesino Stanga reports that the Duke's envoy had asked for a 'retracto colorito' of Bianca Maria. See: Boskovits and Brown 2003, p. 599. However, the presence of the carnation as well as jewellery that was part of Bianca Maria's trousseau suggests that it is a betrothal portrait.

to grant him the title 'Duke of Milan' in 1494. Bianca Maria received an enormous dowry of 400,000 gold ducats and a marvellous trousseau that included jewellery, clothing, fabrics, silverware, liturgical vestments and tapestries (app. 4C).[103]

A comparison between Bianca Maria's portrait and her inventory demonstrates that De Predis depicted existing jewellery. The inventory lists a jewel 'made in the form of a brush with the handle formed by a ruby, with an incised turquoise above, and a faceted emerald on top shaped as a heart, and the bristle of nine diamonds and five round pearls, and on the back an 'L' of diamonds' (app. 4C, no. 8). In the portrait this jewel is suspended from Bianca Maria's *lenza*. The device of the *scopetta*, or brush, was first used by Francesco Sforza and then passed on to Ludovico, who often used it on dress and textiles for various family members.[104] In this case, the complete pendant is shaped into a brush. The accompanying motto 'merito et tempore' (with merit and time) is inscribed on the scroll encircling the handle of the brush. As Venturelli noted, some of the details are lost in the painter's translation. Not all of the nine diamonds can be traced, nor the heart shape for that matter. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this is the same jewel.[105] The depiction of this heraldic brush jewel from Bianca Maria's trousseau identifies her as a Sforza bride for the contemporary beholder.

The emphasis on Sforza lineage recurs in Bianca Maria's dress of gold brocade, decorated with the device of the *sempervivum*. The motif is shown here as three individual plants on rocky mountaintops, in a roundel on her bodice and her sleeve. The inventory lists twenty-five mule cloths embroidered with this device (app. 4C, no. 239). Although no dress with the *sempervivum* device appears in the inventory, several *camore* of gold brocade are listed, including the aforementioned example with the device of the *fanale*, the lighthouse of Genoa (app. 4C, no. 61).

The ensemble of clothes and jewellery Bianca Maria is wearing must have been very expensive. The brush-shaped pendant was appraised at 600 ducats. Unfortunately, while the value of Bianca Maria's jewellery is specified in the inventory, that of clothing is not, but the above-cited examples of gold brocade purchases suffice to give an impression of the value represented here. The golden hairnet intertwined with pearls, the pearl-studded ribbons, the jewelled belt and the pearl necklace with pendant are impressive as well. Honour, lineage and expense go hand in hand in Sforza portraiture.

4.1. Dress and decoration in *The Lady with an Ermine*

There is a vast difference between Bianca Maria Sforza's betrothal portrait by Ambrogio de Predis and Leonardo's likeness of Cecilia Gallerani (figs. 62, 3). Cecilia's dress is made of a plain red fabric, the only decoration consisting of black ribbon and gold embroidered borders. A dull blue *sbernia*, lined with yellow fabric, is slung over her left shoulder. Cecilia's hair has been gathered in a *coazzone* with a simple black *lenza*. Her head is covered with a light veil, edged with braided gold. Today the veil appears to run under her chin, but this is the result of later overpaint. Originally only a tiny lock of hair was visible, as can still be seen in a portrait of a lady

[103] Ceruti 1875, p. 53-54. Bianca Maria's trousseau is known in two versions, one Italian and the other in Latin, both of which have been published. See: Calvi 1888, p. 131-147 (Italian); Ceruti 1875, p. 60-74 (Latin). The Italian version is given in full after Calvi in app. 4C. Mary Rogers and Paola Tinagli translated the jewellery section of this inventory from Italian into English: Rogers and Tinagli 2005, p. 128-129, no. 7.14. However, their translation contains some mistakes that could have been avoided by comparing the Italian text to the Latin version. For instance, they read 'faciolo' as 'fagiolo', translating it as 'bean'. The Latin 'sudariolo' shows, however, that the compiler meant 'fazolo[etto]', meaning 'handkerchief'.
[104] Milan 2009, p. 178.
[105] Venturelli 1996b, p. 50.

painted around the same time and attributed to Ambrogio de Predis, now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (fig. 71).[106] The jewellery consists of one rather simple necklace of black beads, wrapped around her neck twice. The same kind of necklace is seen in other Milanese portraits, such as the two portraits of Beatrice in Florence and Oxford, where it is combined with a second necklace with a precious pendant, a decorated *lenza* and a head brooch (figs. 68-69). The lack of other jewellery in the *Lady with an Ermine* is therefore striking.

It has sometimes been suggested that Cecilia's lesser status obliged her to dress in a more modest way. As a mistress, it is supposed, she could not afford to dress as ostentatiously as a true court lady of noble birth.[107] Evidence suggests, however, that mistresses dressed just as beautifully and richly as other court ladies. In a letter written in 1479, the Ferrarese courtier Lodovico Fiaschi described the riches of the Sforza that were shown to Ercole I d'Este of Ferrara by the Duchess of Milan, Bona of Savoy. After Ercole had admired all the jewellery, he especially requested to see the jewels belonging to Galeazzo Maria's mistress, Lucia Marliani:

> He also wanted to see those of the Countess [of Melzo], the woman kept by the Duke of Milan [Galeazzo Maria]. Mylady [Bona of Savoy] showed them with difficulty to his Lordship, but she did not want to see them herself and went into another room, and then there was very much to see. Certainly these also are beautiful and I believe they are worth more than 40,000 ducats and [there were] many and beautiful pearls.[108]

We already encountered examples of the huge number of garments made of gold brocade and other costly fabrics Galeazzo Maria had made for his mistress.[109] This letter shows that Lucia also owned a precious collection of jewellery. Like Cecilia, Lucia was not of noble birth and she was only given the titles of Countess of Melzo and Gorgonzola after she became the Duke's mistress.[110] Even though Bona of Savoy did not like it and even literally looked away from Lucia's riches, Galeazzo Maria not only dressed his mistress sumptuously, but also allowed her precious jewels to be shown to visitors.

Cecilia herself was apparently dressed equally well by Ludovico Sforza. In a letter to Ercole d'Este, Giacomo Trotti described how Beatrice had made a scene when she heard her husband was keeping a mistress. She refused to wear a dress of gold tissue that was a gift from Ludovico, because he had presented Cecilia with a similar one. In the end, Ludovico was obliged to marry off Cecilia.[111] Again, this anecdote shows that mistresses were presented with very costly garments. Even though Beatrice finally had her way, Cecilia did wear lavish attire. Therefore, her lesser status is not the sole explanation for her rather plain dress in the portrait.

A comparison between the portraits of Cecila Gallerani and Bianca Maria Sforza gains importance in the light of the existence of an inventory of the dresses Cecilia received when she married Count Bergamino (app. 4B). The final part of the inventory is lost, which means we

---

[106] Bull 1992, p. 77-78.
[107] Butazzi 1998, p. 71. Also compare: Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 158, who describes Cecilia's dress as 'fittingly modest and restrained'.
[108] 'Lo Signore volse anche vedere quelle de la contessa zoè de quella femmina che tenia lo Ducha de Milano. Madona cum difichulta le mostrò alo Signore ma essa non le volse vedere che andò in un altra camara et poi ge fu da vedere assai, certo anche quelle sono bello et credo siano de valuta de più de 40 milia ducati et perle assai et belle.' Lodovico Fiaschi to Eleanor of Aragon, 25 September 1479. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, p. 356-357, vol. 1, note 3.
[109] See p. 74-75 of this chapter.
[110] Lucia Marliani came from a Milanese partician's family and was actually bought from her husband by Galeazzo Maria for 8,000 ducats. See: Ettlinger 1994, p. 779.
[111] Cartwright 1905, p. 89-90.

have only an overview of Cecilia's *sbernie* and *camore*. Unfortunately, there is no record of any other garments, accessories or jewellery. The handwriting and the size of the paper correspond with other inventories from the Registri Ducali Sforzeschi, suggesting Cecilia was provided with a trousseau by the ducal household.[112]

Cecilia's wardrobe was not as sumptuous as Bianca Maria's, which was unsurpassed in affluence not only in Milan, but in all Italy. However, it was nearly on a par with the slightly earlier trousseau of Chiara Sforza, the illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, dating from 1489 (app. 4A). Cecilia's incomplete inventory lists a total of thirty-five garments (*sbernie* and *camore*) and Chiara's lists thirty-one (*mongini*, *camore*, *turche* and *mantelline*). Both ladies had several garments of gold or silver brocade at their disposal. One of Cecilia's *camore*, 'a camora of black tabby silk edges with murrey velvet all around, made with the device of the lighthouse [of Genoa]', was even decorated with a prominent Sforza device (app. 4B, no. 17). Other decorations, which can also be traced in the trousseaux of Chiara and Bianca Maria Sforza alike, include embroidered letters or numbers, flowers, strips of fabric applied to the garment and hemlines edged with contrasting fabrics. In short, Cecilia's wardrobe was certainly not inferior to those of Sforza women.

The only decoration Leonardo applied to Cecilia's dress in her portrait consists of strips of gold embroidery in a knot pattern along the sleeves, the neckline and the sides of the bodice. It is the well-known *groppi* or *fantasia dei vinci* motif. Cecilia herself owned a *camora* made of green satin that was completely decorated with *groppi* in gold thread and red and black silk. Several other *camore* and a crimson *sbernia* were decorated with black *groppi* around the hem (app. 4B, nos. 6, 19, 20, 22). Leonardo was particularly fond of the *fantasia dei vinci* motif and, being from Vinci, the pun must have appealed to him. He made many drawings of interlaced cords and frequently used the knot motif in his paintings. Vasari later scorned him for it, stating that Leonardo 'even wasted his time in making a regular design of knots so that the cord cannot be traced from one end to the other'.[113]

In Cecilia's portrait, part of the knot decoration is hidden under her blue *sbernia*. Interestingly, a photo of the panel under infrared light made in the 1950s revealed parts of the underdrawing, lightly sketched with a brush (fig. 77). Under the *sbernia* there are two parallel lines that seem to be an initial outline for the border along the neckline of the dress. The shoulder of the dress is indicated as well.[114] Very recently Pascal Cotte made LAM images of the painting that show the inner layers of the paint surface. This revealed that Leonardo not only started sketching the outlines of the dress, but also painted the complete dress including the decorative embroidery border with the *fantasia dei vinci* motif.[115] This means he added the *sbernia* only in a later phase. Also striking is the observation from the infrared reflectogram, published in 1992, that Leonardo carefully followed the dotted outlines of the cartoon for the head, eyes, nose and mouth, but that the neckline of Cecilia's gown was originally planned higher up the chest. The dots indicating the original design appear clearly above the ermine's right eye in the infrared reflectogram.[116] Syson further analysed how the asymmetrical wear of the *sbernia*, slung

---

[112] Nowadays, the document is in the Biblioteca Satale di Cremona. See: Rosina 1983, p. 68.
[113] 'oltreché perse tempo fino a disegnare gruppi di corde fatti con ordine, e che da un capo seguissi tutto il resto fino a l'altro', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 18. On the use of the *groppi* by Leonardo and his influence, see: Bambach 1991, p. 72-98.
[114] Kwiatkowski 1955, p. 15 and fig. 19; Kwiatkowski 1991, p. 39.
[115] A book entitled *Lumière on The Lady with an Ermine* by Pascal Cotte containing all results of his technical research is forthcoming and will be available very soon. I thank Pascal Cotte for bringing this to my attention.
[116] Bull 1992, p. 80, image on p. 81; Bull 1998, p. 84-85, image on p. 88.

over one shoulder, gives a slight *contrapposto* effect to the figure and at the same time creates a plain background for the head of the ermine. The *groppi* would have been too crowded to set off the animal's profile.[117] The results of technical research suggest that Leonardo indeed adapted details of the dress to suit the needs of the composition.

4.2. Spanish fashion

Notwithstanding the adjustments Leonardo made, Cecilia's outfit is still recognizable as contemporary Milanese dress as dictated at the time by Spanish fashion. Both the *coazzone* and the *sbernia* were perceived as Spanish by contemporaries, as several sources show. In the aforementioned trousseau of Ippolita Sforza, dated 1492, a distinction is made between 'garments made in the Spanish style', under which are listed *sbernie*, *camore* and *faldie*, and 'garments made in the Milanese style', that is *mongini* and *mantelline*, types of garments that were already worn earlier in the fifteenth century.[118] Tristano Calco's report of the wedding festivities of Ludovico and Beatrice in 1491 provides a further description of the Spanish fashion. After praising the splendour of dress of all persons present, which actually could not be expressed in words according to Calco, he describes the dress of the sisters Anna and Bianca Maria Sforza, Beatrice d'Este and Ludovico's illegitimate daughter Bianca:

> It is the task of the eyes only, not the ears, to perceive the entirety, of which you can say that the cloth of gold was only a minor part. All of them went in the Spanish fashion, with their bodices curved below the breasts, and the cloak according to the Gabine rite,[119] from the right shoulder drawn to the left side; and the hair was hanging gathered in a braid down the back, bejewelled with heavy pearls.[120]

The earliest mention of the Spanish style can be found in a description of the wedding festivities of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon in 1490, by the Ferrarese ambassador Trotti. The couple got married the year before, but because the bride was still in mourning over the death of her mother at that time, the festivities had been postponed and on 13 January 1490 the famous 'festa del paradiso', staged by Bellincioni and Leonardo, took place. Trotti described Isabella as 'dressed in the Spanish style with a mantle of white silk on her dress, that was made of gold brocade with a white ground, adorned with other colours, as is the Spanish custom, edged with a large number of jewels and pearls. She was so beautiful and shiny that she seemed to be a sun.'[121]

---

[117] London 2011, p. 112.
[118] 'le vestimente [...] facte alla Spagnola' and 'vestimente facte a la Milanese', Santoro 1953, p. 181-182.
[119] It is not clear to me what Calco meant by 'curved bodices'. It may have been a certain type of arch-shaped decoration applied to the bodice. The description of the cloak refers to the way Roman priests wore their toga when performing religious rites, draping it diagonally across the chest to keep their arms free, the so-called 'cinctus gabinus', named after the Roman town of Gabii. See: Scheid 2003, p. 80. Calco thus describes the practice of wearing the *sbernia* slung over one shoulder.
[120] 'Oculis ipsis, non auribus, opus est, ut ea integre percipias, quorum minor pars intextum aurum censebatur. Habitu vero omnes Hispano incedebant, falcatis infra ubera pectoribus, ac pallio ritu Gabino dextro ab humero laevum ad latus subducto: tum sparsi per terga crines, pluribus connexi in tricam, gemmati pendebant, margaritisque graves.' Cited from: Lopez 2008, p. 130, who published Calco's description in its entirety with an Italian translation. I am grateful to Cristoph Pieper for his kind assistance with the translation.
[121] 'vestita a la spagnola, con uno mantello di seta biancha sopra la zuba, quale era de brochato d'oro in campo bianco, adonixato d'altri coluri, como se costuma a l'usanza spagnola, con gran numero de zoglie et perle intorno: la quale era bella et pulita che pareva un sole', Solmi 1904, p. 83.

For a long time, many art historians have dated the *Lady with an Ermine* to c. 1483-85.[122] However, the appearance of the new fashion from Spain in the early 1490s is a reliable *terminus post quem*. On the basis of this dress historical argument, Schiaparelli was one of the first art historians to date the portrait to about 1490. He assumed the style was first worn in Naples, which was under Spanish rule from 1442. He thought the fashion was introduced in Milan then through the marriage of Gian Galeazzo Sforza and Isabella of Aragon, a Neapolitan princess, in 1489, and that of Ludovico il Moro with Beatrice d'Este in 1491, who had spent her childhood at the Aragonese court in Naples. From Milan, it would have spread throughout the region to the courts of Ferrara, Urbino and Mantua.[123]

Schiaparelli's idea had no following until Żygulski took up the argument in 1969. He maintained that Isabella and especially Beatrice were responsible for introducing the style in Milan. However, unlike Schiaparelli, he did not believe that Spanish fashion spread from Milan to the rest of Lombardy and parts of Emilia Romagna, for the earliest visual evidence of the hairstyle in Northern Italy pre-dates the marriages of 1489 and 1491. It is an altarpiece from Bologna with portraits of the Bentivoglio family by Lorenzo Costa, signed and dated August 1488 (fig. 78).[124]

Żygulski's idea has often been repeated, both in dress history literature and by Leonardo scholars, even though neither Schiaparelli nor Żygulski supported their hypotheses with visual evidence or archival sources from Naples.[125] The lack of visual sources is not the only problem with the hypothesis. It is unlikely that foreign princesses, like Isabella of Aragon, were allowed to keep wearing their native fashion. When Galeazzo Maria Sforza married Bona of Savoy in 1468, she ritually changed her French attire for Milanese dress when she reached Pavia.[126] Moreover, the references to Isabella and Beatrice wearing Spanish style dress all date from the period after their marriages. During the wedding festivities celebrated in Naples, Isabella is recorded to have been wearing Neapolitan dress.[127]

Neapolitan women's fashion in the second half of the fifteenth century is a field that is still largely unexplored.[128] There are as yet no indications that the *coazzone* and the *sbernia* were indeed worn at the Neapolitan court. A complete lack of painted portraits from Naples prevents us from establishing a visual history of Neapolitan dress.[129] Two sculpted busts of Aragonese princesses, both dating from the mid-1470s, are the only visual source for the period. The first bust has been identified as Eleanor of Aragon, Beatrice d'Este's mother, sculpted shortly before her marriage to Ercole d'Este (fig. 79). The second represents her sister Beatrice of Aragon (1457-1508), who married Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (fig. 80). Neither of the women wears

---

[122] For an overview of scholars adhering to this date, see: Marani 1998, p. 81.
[123] Schiaparelli 1921, p. 135-142.
[124] Żygulski 1969, p. 3-21. The author later repeated the same arguments in: Żygulski 1991, p. 24-26.
[125] For the dress historical literature, see: Butazzi 1977, p. 24; Herald 1981, p. 193-195; Binaghi Olivari 1983, p. 642-644; Scott 2007, p. 141, 165-168; Welch 2008, p. 247-248. For the Leonardo literature, see most recently: Budapest 2009, p. 242; London 2011, p. 112; Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 158.
[126] Bona's change of garments was even the subject of a lost painting in the 'Sala delle Duchesse' in the castle of Pavia, see: Levi Pisetzky 1957, p. 726. See also Welch 2008, p. 247, esp. note 22, who cites a letter by Gian Galeazzo with the order of veils in the Lombard fashion for his bride.
[127] Dina 1921, p. 281-282.
[128] Two exceptions are: Montalto 1922, p. 58-77, who studied the dress of Isabella of Chiaromonte (1424-1465), wife of Ferrante I of Aragon (1424-1494); and Cirillo Mastrocinque 1968, p. 31-49, who devoted a chapter of her book on dress in Renaissance Naples to the fifteenth century, which however is heavily dependent on Montalto. Research is complicated by the unfortunate fact that important parts of the Neapolitan archives were destroyed during the Second World War, see: Scott 2007, p. 141.
[129] On the rarity of portraiture in Naples, see: Leone de Castris 2006, p. 84.

the distinctive Spanish style with the hair gathered in a *coazzone*. Instead, their hair has been put up in a wreath covered with a hair net.[130]

Furthermore, the only known reference to a *sbernia* in an inventory from Naples dates from 1503, several years after the style culminated in Milan.[131] In the north on the contrary, the garment is already present in the inventory of the trousseau of Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471–1526), drawn up in Mantua on 20 February 1488, for her marriage with Guidobaldo da Montefeltro (1472-1508), Duke of Urbino. No less than two luxurious examples are mentioned: 'a *sbernia* of crimson satin lined with ermines' and 'a *sbernia* of murrey fabric lined with blue silk with jewels and pearls and a flounce all round'.[132] Combined with the visual evidence of the Bentivoglio altarpiece, which is firmly dated to 1488 as well, this suggests the Spanish fashion was already prevalent in Northern Italy by that year.

With their dating of the dress worn by Cecilia Gallerani to c. 1490 on the basis of Milanese sources on the introduction of Spanish fashion, Schiaparelli and Żygulski made an important contribution to the research on the portrait. The former dating of the panel of c. 1483-85 is now commonly rejected. Nevertheless, the introduction of the new style of dress through marital connections with Naples is unlikely, because the Spanish fashion was already clearly present in Northern Italy in 1488, before these marriages took place. The slightly earlier date of 1489-90, put forward by Shell and Sironi and recently by Syson, based respectively on the sitter's biography and on stylistic grounds, is therefore perfectly in line with the sitter's dress and hairstyle.[133]

4.3. Conveying coiffures

Taking the *coazzone* as an example, Evelyn Welch recently argued that a headdress was not only a matter of fashion, but also an indication of political and diplomatic relations among court elites. Following the common view, Welch states that Beatrice introduced the *coazzone* in Milan after her marriage. In this view, she continued to wear her native style, unlike other consorts, and then imposed it on other women at court. Welch regards this as a visual sign of Beatrice's pre-eminence in the Milanese court. Her husband may not have been officially Duke of Milan yet and he may have kept a mistress, but it was she who was followed and imitated, as is shown in other portraits of prominent court ladies, such as Bianca Maria Sforza (fig. 62). Welch even regards the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, who is wearing a *coazzone* as well, as an acknowledgement of her 'subordinate status'.[134]

Welch does not take into account that Cecilia was most likely portrayed in 1489-1490, before Beatrice's arrival in Milan in 1491. As discussed above, notwithstanding her reputation as an inventor of new fashions, Beatrice was probably not responsible for the introduction of the

---

[130] Damianaki 2000, p. 68-76, 80-81. On the bust of Beatrice of Aragon, see also: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 311-313.

[131] Result of the study of a large amount of inventories ranging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, found in the Neapolitan archives by: Bevere 1897, p. 317.

[132] 'una sbergnia de raso cremesino fodrà di ermellini' and 'una sbergnia de pan morello fodrà de zandal turchino cum zoile et perle e una balzana intorno', Gandini 1893, p. 294. It is noteworthy that dress in Mantua and Milan were considered to be alike in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. See: Scott 2007, p. 149-152, who cites two requests of fashion dolls from Mantua. In 1460 the Marquis of Mantua wrote to his wife that the Milanese ambassador wanted a fashion doll dressed up in the Mantuan style, even though women in Milan and Mantua wore the same fashion. Later Francis I of France requested a similar doll from Isabella d'Este. She sent him one, stating however that he would see nothing he had not seen before, because 'what we wear, the ladies in Milan wear.'

[133] Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 58; Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 112.

[134] Welch 2008, p. 248-249.

coazzone in Milan. Moreover, Welch based her view on visual evidence only. Whether it is a sculpted bust, a panel portrait or a Milanese coin, Beatrice is indeed consistently portrayed wearing a *coazzone* (figs. 65, 68-70, 81). Written sources, however, show that she did not wear this hairstyle exclusively. Several letters record very different types of headdresses.

On 12 April 1491, just a few months after his marriage, Ludovico wrote to his sister-in-law Isabella d'Este about a stroll to Milan that Beatrice and Isabella of Aragon had undertaken. They were both wearing *pannicelli*, simple linen veils, which was not appreciated by several women they encountered:

> […] and now that they [Isabella of Aragon and Beatrice d'Este] are here in Milan, yesterday they put on *pannicelli*, or head veils, on their heads, because it was raining, to go together by foot, on the ground, accompanied by four or six ladies, to buy things that are in the city; and because it is not the custom here to wear *pannicelli*, it seems that some women were about to make egregious remarks, and my wife flamed up and started to speak egregiously to them, in such a way they thought to come to blows. Then they returned home completely soaked and tired, so they made a fine sight.[135]

In this letter, Ludovico underlines the fact that *pannicelli* are not usually worn in Milan and it must have been very strange to Milanese eyes to see two duchesses with such plain headdresses. We may have encountered a rare example of Neapolitan fashion here. In Naples, both real and fictional queens were depicted with a simple veil covering their heads. In a miniature in King Alfonso's prayer book, he and his wife are portrayed attending a mass (fig. 82). The Queen, in the right foreground, wears a plain, white cloth under her golden crown. Another miniature in a Neapolitan manuscript about the life of John the Baptist shows the saint in front of King Herod and Queen Heriodas (fig. 83). Heriodas, seated next to her husband on an elevated throne, wears only a humble *pannicelli* on her head.

A second example of a headdress other than the *coazzone* – this one much more luxurious – is described in a letter written by Giacomo Trotti in 1492, in which he reports on the festivities organized on the occasion of the May feast. During a hunting party, Beatrice, Isabella of Aragon and Ludovico's illegitimate daughter Bianca all appeared in the same green dresses and wore the same hairstyle:

> They had their hair coiffed in the French manner, with a horn (*corno*) on the head with long veils of silk. Their horns were decorated with beautiful pearls alternated with many jewels of small diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other very worthy things, which were very sumptuous and rich, but the pearls of the Duchess of Bari [Beatrice d'Este] were much larger and more beautiful than those of the Duchess of Milan [Isabella of Aragon].[136]

---

[135] '[…] et essendo hora qui a Milano, se misseno heri che pioveva ad andare loro due cum quattro o sei donne per la terra a piede cum li panicelli, sive sugacapi, in testa per andare a comprare de le cose che sono per la città; et non essendo la consuetudine qui de andare cum li panicelli, pare che per alcune done gli volesse esser ditto villania, et la p.ta mia consorte se azuffò et cominciò a dirli villania a loro, per modo che se credeteno de venire a le mani. Ritornorono poi a casa tutte sguazate et strache, che facevano uno bello vedere.' Ludovico Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Milan 12 April 1491. Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 110-111.

[136] 'haveano conza la testa alla franzese, videlicit con il corno in capo con li vilii longhi de seda, li loro corni erano guarniti de bellissime perle tramezzate con molte zoglie de diamantini, de robini, de smiraldi et altre deginissme prede ch'era una cosa sontuosa et richa, ma le perle de la Duchessa de Bari erano molto più grosse ed belle de quelle de la Duchessa de Milano', Letter from Giacomo Trotti to the Este family, Vigevano, 1 May 1492. Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 558.

The French manner Trotti refers to must be the turret, a conical headdress that was often decorated with veils, worn in France and Flanders starting in the 1450s. A contemporary French writer described it as a 'chimney', stating that the younger the wearer was, the taller the chimney.[137] A fine example of a turret can be seen in the likeness of the Florentine Maria Baroncelli, who was portrayed by Memling around 1470, when her husband was in charge of the Bruges branch of the Medici bank (fig. 56).

In the case described by Trotti there is indeed a visual sign of Beatrice's stature, but it is not the emulation of a hairstyle she invented or introduced as Welch supposes, but rather the differentiation in decoration of the headdresses. Beatrice's jewels are larger and prettier than Isabella's. Trotti continues his letter with a description of the other court ladies in the entourage, who were dressed in the same manner but without jewellery. The message is clear: once again status is conveyed through splendour.

The turret was not the only type of French headgear worn in Milan. In 1492 the Milanese ambassador in Paris, Agostino Calco, described the headdress of the French queen in a letter to Ludovico il Moro. It was made of black velvet 'in the French manner, hanging behind the ears down to the shoulders, loaded with diamonds'.[138] He was referring to a rather new style of women's headgear, which consisted of a gold coif covered with a black frontlet. Queen Anne of Brittany is shown wearing this headdress in a miniature in a copy Ovid's *Heroids*, dating from 1492 or shortly after (fig. 84).[139] A very rare example of a French panel portrait, dated c. 1490-91, depicts Margaret of Austria at the age of ten (fig. 85). Margaret spent her childhood at the French court and is portrayed in French court fashion, consisting of a crimson gown lined with ermine and the same headdress with the typical black frontlet.[140] The style was very appealing to Ludovico and he requested a design of the headdress to be able to recreate the style for the Milanese ladies. His efforts seem to have been effective, for in 1493 a '*chiapparone* (an Italianised version of *chaperon*, French for headdress) of black satin' is listed in the inventory of the Milanese sisters Angela and Ippolita Sforza.[141]

These examples demonstrate that the *coazzone* was not the only type of headgear worn in Milan, as a study limited to portraiture would imply. Interestingly, two of the examples show a strong French influence. French court fashions of the fifteenth century has not received much attention from dress historians, which makes further comparison of French and Milanese styles difficult.[142] From 1500 onward, French sartorial influence in Italy is generally recognized.[143] It seems likely, however, that exchanges between at least Milan and France began earlier. Beatrice d'Este and her husband corresponded with French ambassadors and they supplied her with more fashion novelties, which she occasionally shared with her sister Isabella. In 1491 she sent Isabella 'the drawing of the rope to wrap [around the waist] which I received from France'.[144]

---

[137] 'tant plus belles et jeunes elles sont, plus hautes cheminées elles ont', Pierre des Gros in *Le jardin des nobles*, cited from: Van Buren 2011, p. 319.
[138] 'alla francese pendente dietro alle orecchie et fin sulle spalle, carico de diamanti', Agostino Calco to Ludovico Sforza, Paris, 8 April 1492. Cited from: Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 415.
[139] Van Buren 2011, p. 252.
[140] On the dating of portrait and the biography of the sitter, see: O'Neill 1987, p. 135.
[141] 'chiapparone de raxo negro', cited from: Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 2, p. 290. The headdress appears in fresco in the Santuario of Crea in Northern Italy, where it is worn by a female donor. See: idem, p. 269.
[142] A rather general survey of French fashion between 1461 and 1515 is given in: Evans 1952, p. 59-66.
[143] Scott 2007, p. 172.
[144] 'el desegno del cordone d'oro da cingere che m'è stato portato da Francia', Beatrice d'Este to Isabella d'Este, 1 September 1491. Ferrari 2008, p. 37. Isabella had asked for a drawing of the *cordone* in an earlier letter: 'Intendo che Hieronimo de Ziliolo portoe de Franza a la S.V. uno certo cordone da cingere.

Until now, only Spanish fashion was considered to have been a major influence on Milanese fashion in the 1490s. French styles, however, are likely to have been more important for the development of Milanese fashion in this period than previously thought and French hairstyles were worn alongside Spanish ones.

It is unlikely that these foreign styles had political significance. Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari studied the dress in Milan between 1499 and 1512, when the French were in power. She raised the question whether there were notable differences between the supporters of the French and the Sforza allies. She had to conclude that there are hardly any indications that the different parties wore different dress and in portraiture they dressed exactly the same.[145] The high cost and the novelty of dress, both conveyors of splendour, were much more important than the adoption of the style of an allied ruler.

The *coazzone* seems to have had no specific political meaning in either court ceremony or portraiture. However, its dominant appearance in portraiture, leaving no room for other hairstyles, suggests an intentionally created court iconography that has not been noted before as such. Visually, the hairstyle works very well in profile portraits. It leaves the face free, which the French cap with the black frontlet does not, and the long braid creates yet another surface that can be decorated with ribbons and jewels. Moreover, when individuals are consistently portrayed with the same hairstyle this adds to their recognisability, which is very important for a ruler or a ruler's wife, such as Beatrice d'Este. Returning to the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, we can assume that her hairstyle does not have any political significance and that she, and Leonardo, were simply following local fashion.

5.1. Folds and wrinkles

When comparing the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani and the *Belle Ferronnière* to the portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, there is another difference besides the degree of ornamentation that catches the eye. The gold brocade of Bianca Maria's dress is not only decorated with an intricate pattern, it is also rather heavy and stiff. The bodice and sleeve cover the sitter's body so smoothly that not a single wrinkle can be detected. This is of course due to the fact that gold brocades like these were heavy and rigid. The wish to display the pattern of heraldic devices uninterrupted by creases may have been another consideration for the painter. The effect, as Pedretti noted, is rather like a doll enveloped in riches.[146] The same rigidity can be observed in other Milanese portraits, such as the two portraits now in Oxford and Florence representing Beatrice or the National Gallery's full-length portrait of a court lady (figs. 68-69, 74).

The representation of dress in the *Lady with an Ermine* and *Belle Ferronnière* is completely different. Instead of the rigid gold brocade, these sitters are wearing pliable fabrics that show folds and wrinkles. This interest in the depiction of drapery is typically Florentine and was an important part of the education of a painter in Quattrocento Florence. The pupil had to master the ability to convey different textures, ranging from heavy brocades and woollen cloth to the lightest veil, while respecting the volume of the figure underneath.[147]

In his *Trattato di architettura*, written between 1461 and 1464, Filarete (c. 1400-c. 1469) suggested the use of a lay figure as an aid to the painter when having to depict garments:

Pregola voglia per mio singolar contento far fare un designo de epso et madarcelo, che la me farà gran piacere.' Isabella d'Este to Beatrice d'Este, Marmirolo, 11 August 1491. Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 461.

[145] Binaghi Olivari 1979, p. 85-94.

[146] Pedretti 1990a, p. 172.

[147] Florence 1992, p. 82-82.

When you have to clothe a person, whether you wish the dress to be ancient or modern, do as I tell you. Have a little wooden figure with jointed arms, legs and neck. Then make a dress of linen in whatever fashion you choose, as if it were alive. Put it on him in the action that you wish and fix it up. If these drapes do not hang up as you wish, take melted glue and bathe the figure well. Then fix the folds as you want them and let them dry so they will be firm. If you then wish to arrange them in another way, put it in warm water and you can then change them into another form. Draw your figures in the way you want them to be dressed from this.[148]

Several Florentine painters, like Piero della Francesca, Lorenzo di Credi and Fra Bartolommeo, used this technique.[149] Vasari informs us that figurines clothed in drapery served Leonardo as well:

he [Leonardo] studied much in drawing after nature and sometimes in making models of figures in clay, and then set himself patiently to draw them on a certain kind of very fine Reims cloth, or prepared linen: and he executed them in black and white with the point of his brush, so that it was a marvel, as some of them by his hand, which I have in our book of drawings, still bear witness.[150]

A group of sixteen drapery studies on linen is still extant and is either attributed as a whole to Leonardo or to varying members of Verrocchio's workshop, including Leonardo himself, Ghirlandaio and the aforementioned Lorenzo di Credi and Fra Bartolommeo.[151] An example of a study for the drapery of a kneeling woman can be found in the collection of the British Museum (fig. 86). Although the posture of the woman suggests this might have been a study for an annunciation, it is impossible to relate it to a particular painting by Leonardo or the Verrocchio workshop. It seems primarily to have been an exercise in the study of drapery, like

[148] 'Quando n'hai a fare, fa' vestire uno in quello abito che lo vuoi fare, s'egli è moderno; e s'egli è antico, fa' come ti dirò. Fa' d'avere una figuretta di legname che sia disnodata le braccia e le gambe e ancora il collo, e poi fa'una vesta di panno lino, e con quello abito che ti piace, come se fussino d'uno vivo, e mettiglile indosso in quello che tu vuoi ch'egli stia, l'acconcia, e se que' panni non istessino come tu volessi, abbi la colla strutta, e bagnalo bene indosso a detta figura; e poi acconcia le pieghe a tuo modo, e falle seccare, e straranno poi ferme. E se poi la vuoi fare in altro modo, mettilo in acqua calda, e potra'lo rimutare in altra forma. E da questo ritrai poi le figure che tu vuoi che sieno vestite.', Filarete 1965, vol. 1, p. 315 (translation) and vol. 2, Book XXIV, f. 184v-r (facsimile).

[149] For an overview of literary sources on the use of lay figures (both with and without drapery), see: Prinz 1977, p. 204-206.

[150] 'studiò assai di ritrar di naturale, e qualche volta in far modegli di figure di terra, et adosso a quelle metteva cenci molli interrati, e poi con pazienza si metteva a ritrargli sopra a certe tele sottilissime di rensa o di panni lini adoperati, e gli lavarova di nero e bianco con la punta del penello, che era cosa miracolosa, come ancora ne fa fede alcuni che ne ho si sua mano in sul nostro libro de' disegni', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 17. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 626.

[151] Six studies of this group are now in the Musée du Louvre: *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. RF 1081), *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. RF 1082), *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. RF 41904), *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. RF 41905), *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. 2255) and *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. 2256). The Uffizi Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe in Florence owns three: *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* (inv. no. 420E), *Drapery for a Standing Figure* (inv. no. 433E) and *Drapery for a Seated Figure* (inv. no. 437E). Two are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, both drapery studies for standing figures (inv. nos. 794.1.2506 and 794.1.2507). Two were at auction in London at Sotheby's on 9 July 2014 (lot nos. 28-29): *Drapery for a Kneeling Figure* and *Drapery for a Figure in Profile* (current whereabouts unknown). The other studies are: *Drapery for a Seated Figure*, Paris, Fondation Custodia (inv. no. 6632), *Drapery for a Kneeling Woman*, London, British Museum (inv. no. 1895,0915.489), *Drapery for a Figure in Frontal View*, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett (inv. no. 5039). All studies have been published in: Paris 1990, p. 44-75, cats. 1-16. For an overview of the opinions of different experts regarding attribution, see: Viatte 2003, p. 114-115.

Vasari described, rather than a preparatory drawing.[152] Whether it was common practice in Verrocchio's workshop to study drapery so thoroughly or Leonardo was the only pupil to occupy himself with these drawings on linen, it is clear that he had a special interest in the subject from his early years on.

Not only did Leonardo study drapery through drawing; his ideas on the subject make up an important part of his writings as well. As early as the 1490s he began making notes for a treatise on the theory of painting, perhaps on prompted by Ludovico il Moro. After Leonardo's death, his pupil Francesco Melzi collected many of these notes in chapter four of the *Trattato della pittura*. Pedretti dated a considerable part of this chapter to around 1492, shortly after Leonardo painted Cecilia Gallerani (app. 1, nos. 2-7).[153] The study of drapery from nature is an important theme in these writings. For example, Leonardo stresses the importance of using the exact same fabric you want to draw as a model, for if you use another fabric or, even worse, materials like leather or paper, the folds will look completely different (app. 1, no. 3):[154]

How draperies should be drawn from nature: that is to say, if you want to represent woollen cloth draw the folds from that; and if it is to be silk, or fine cloth, or coarse, or of linen or of voile, vary the folds in each and do not represent dresses, as many do, from models covered with paper or thin leather which will deceive you greatly.

The importance of the awareness of different kinds of fabric and their typical ways of forming pleats, is again apparent when he writes about the depiction of garments (app. 1, no. 5):

Garments should be diversified with different kinds of folds which vary according to the kind of garment. If the fabric is thick and loosely woven, make long, thin folds, like macaroni, and if it is of medium thickness and tightly woven, make the folds smooth, with small angles.

Alberti's treatise *De pictura* (On painting), published in 1435 and translated into Italian in 1436, must have been a source of inspiration. Like Leonardo does in his notes, Alberti emphasized the importance of folds to enlivening garments. He recommended including a personification of the wind in narrative painting to justify garments being blown about:

Since by nature clothes are heavy and do not make curves at all, as they tend always to fall straight down to the ground, it is a good idea, when we wish clothing to have movement, to have in the corner of the picture the face of the West or South wind blowing between the clouds and moving all the clothing before it. The pleasing result will be that those sides of the bodies the wind strikes will appear under the covering of the clothes almost as if they were naked, since the clothes are made to adhere to the body by the force of the wind; on the other sides the clothing blown about by the wind will wave appropriately up in the air. But in this motion caused by the wind one should be careful that movements of clothing do not take place against the wind, and that they are neither too irregular nor excessive in their extent.[155]

---

[152] Some art historians have tried to relate some of the Louvre drapery studies to Leonardo's *Annunciation* in the Galleria degli Uffizi (inv. no. 1618), but none of them matches the poses of Mary and the angel exactly. The unlikely suggestion has been put forward that only studies for poses that were [rejected?] have come down to us, whereas the final preparatory sketches are all lost. See: Popham 1945, p. 12.
[153] Pedretti 1964, p. 201-202; Pedretti 1977, vol. 1, p. 285-290.
[154] Although Leonardo does not specifically refer to gold brocade, probably because he is not very interested in the depiction of it, Duits discussed an interesting example of a picture by Ghirlandaio, where he obviously used a lighter fabric as a model to depict gold brocade. Duits 2008, p. 24-25.
[155] 'Iam vero cum pannos motibus aptos esse volumus, cumque natura sui panni graves et assiduo in terram cadentes omnes admodum flexiones refugiant, pulchre idcirco in pictura Zephiri aut Austri facies perflans inter nubes ad historiae angulum ponetur, qua panni omnes adversi pellantur. Ex quo gratia illa

Leonardo clearly draws upon Alberti's theory and shows the same interest in the movements and folds of textiles, but his approach is more naturalistic. Whereas Alberti stresses the decorative qualities of fluttering drapery and the possibility of depicting the nearly nude body when garments are blown against it, Leonardo is more concerned with a close observation of nature. He warns painters to be aware that between the body and a mantle there are several more layers of clothing that prevent the shape of limbs showing directly through the upper garment (app. 1, no. 4):

you surely cannot wish the cloak to be next to the flesh, for you must suppose that between the flesh and the cloak there are other garments which prevent the form of the limbs appearing distinctly through the cloak. And those limbs which you allow to be seen you must make thicker so that the other garments may appear to be under the cloak.

The argument is echoed in a slightly later paragraph, dated between 1505 and 1510 (app. 1, no. 11):

If you represent figures clothed in several garments, it should not appear that the topmost garment encloses within itself the stark bones of the figure, but covers the flesh as well, and the fabrics clothe the flesh with as much thickness as is required by the multiplication of layers. Folds of cloth that surround the body must decrease their thickness toward the extremities of the limb surrounded.

The emphasis on studying the behaviour of fabric on the body is clearly visible in the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani. Leonardo minutely observed the folds of the sleeve, created by the bending of her arm, as well as the wrinkles around the slit of her *sbernia* that are caused by Cecilia putting her arm through. The *sbernia* is depicted in a way that is very similar to what Leonardo describes in a section of the notebook MS BN 2038 entitled 'Of the nature of folds in drapery' (app. 1, no. 2):

Everything by nature tends to remain at rest. Drapery, being of equal density and thickness on its wrong side and its right, has a tendency to lie flat; therefore when you give it a fold or a plait forcing it out of its flatness, note well the result of the constraint in the part where it is most confined; and the part which is farthest from this constraint you will see the relapses most into the natural state; that is to say, lies free and flowing.

Like Alberti had done earlier, Leonardo explains here how a piece of cloth has a natural tendency to spread out in a flat manner. This means that a garment is most wrinkly at the point where it is most limited in its movements, like at the end of the slit of Cecilia's *sbernia*, and that it flows more freely the further away it is from that point. He makes a similar observation further on in the same notebook (app. 1, no. 3):

You ought not to give drapery a great confusion of many folds, but rather only introduce them where they are held by the hand or the arms; the rest you may let fall simply where it is its nature to flow; and do not let the nude forms be broken by too many details and interrupted folds.

---

aderit ut quae corporum latera ventus feriat, quod panni vento ad corpus imprimantur, ea sub panni velamento prope nuda appareant. A reliquis vero lateribus panni vento agitati perapte in aera inundabunt. Sed in hac venti pulsione illud caveatur ne ulli pannorum motus contra ventum surgant, neve nimium refracti, neve nimium porrecti sint.' Alberti 1972, p. 86-87, Book II, 45.

Throughout Leonardo's notes, whether it concerns the study of water, the effect of the wind on trees or the depiction of drapery, movement receives a great deal of attention. Leonardo discerns three different varieties of draperies with their own specific movements (app. 1, no. 9):

> The draperies with which figures are clothed are of three sorts, that is, thin, thick and medium. Thin ones are lightest and liveliest in motion. Therefore when a figure is running, consider the motions of that figure, because it bends now to the right, now to the left. When it rests on the right foot, the drapery on that side rises from the foot, reflecting by its undulation the impact of the foot on the ground. At the same time, the leg behind relates in the same way to the drapery that rests upon it, while the part of the drapery in front presses, with diverse folds, upon the chest, body, thighs and legs, and all the drapery flies back from the body, except from the leg that is back. Medium draperies show less motion and thick ones almost none, unless a wind contrary to the motion of the figure aids them to move.

The observation of the effect of bending limbs and other movements on textile can also be seen in Leonardo's Milanese portraits. The dress in the earlier Florentine likeness of Ginevra de' Benci, with its rather dull surface, lacks this feature (fig. 1). In the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani however, the slight turn in the sitter's upper body is accentuated by creases in her *sbernia* (fig. 3). Although at first sight more static than Cecilia, the *Belle Ferronnière* is yet another example of how Leonardo used drapery to create the illusion of movement (fig. 4).

The attribution of the latter portrait to Leonardo has aroused a great deal of discussion, not least because of the depiction of the drapery. Wasserman judged 'the heavy stuff and the careful adagio rhythms of the ribbons and the folds along the sleeve of the garment' to be unworthy of Leonardo's mastership.[156] Béguin attributed the portrait to his pupil Boltraffio, as Kenneth Clark had done earlier in his 1939 monograph on Leonardo, although he actually thought the high quality of the ribbons was 'remarkably close to Leonardo'. In later editions, he changed his mind and rightly reattributed the *Belle Ferronière* to Leonardo.[157] Even in his best portraits, like the *Portrait of a Lady in Grey*, Boltraffio is no equal to his teacher in rendering drapery (fig. 87).[158] The ribbons are stiff and completely lack the fluttering quality of those in the *Belle Ferronnière*, and the puffs of the *camicia* are not as fluent as Leonardo's.

Today Leonardo's authorship of the *Belle Ferronnière* is undisputed and its almost sculptural quality is generally recognized.[159] Leonardo's treatment of dress certainly contributes to this quality. Larry Keith already pointed out that the graceful rendering of the sitter's face is a result of Leonardo's studies on light and dark in portraiture and that it is completely consistent with his advice to painters.[160] This is the case for the use of shadow in drapery as well, on which Leonardo wrote (app. 1, no. 10):

> The shadows lying between the folds of cloth surrounding human bodies will be the darker the more directly they are in front of the eye and opposite the concavities where such shadows are created. This applies to instances when the eye is situated in the centre, between the shadowed and the luminous sides of the aforementioned figure.

---

156 Wasserman 1975, p. 166.
157 Béguin 1983, p. 81, Clark 1939, p. 52. For the later edition: Clark 1988, p. 105.
158 On this portrait, see: Morandotti and Natale 2011, p. 115-118, cat. 5.
159 On the comparison with sculpture, see: Marani 1999, p. 182-183 and London 2011, p. 126-127.
160 Keith 2011, p. 62.

In the *Belle Ferronnière* even more than in the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, he made use of these *chiaroscuro* effects in the drapery. The medium heavy fabric of the sitter's sleeve shows big creases, deepened by dark shadows and enlivened with little highlights on top of the gold ribbons.

Another element from Leonardo's studies that reverberates in the *Belle Ferronnière* is the careful distinction between different textiles and the way they form pleats. The more heavy fabric of the dress creates a visually intriguing contrast with the lighter, puffed up linen of the *camicia* at the shoulder and the wrinkly ribbons are a playful addition. Infrared reflectography has revealed that one of the ribbons protruding from the right shoulder was not planned from the start. It is a slightly later addition, painted over the dark background.[161] If Leonardo added this detail himself, he may have done so to increase the suggestion of movement through thin drapery.

It is clear that Leonardo adjusted the rigid court fashions in favour of the suppleness of fabrics. His point of departure was contemporary fashion but rather than rendering court dress in all its magnificence and detail, he omitted details that could disturb the composition. Discussing dress in Cecilia Gallerani's portrait, Syson noted for instance that Leonardo did not include the knot of Cecilia's head veil under her chin that still appears in the underdrawing and was made visible through infrared reflectography.[162] Similarly, the infrared reflectogram of the *Belle Ferronnière* shows underdrawing for what was possibly a dress ornament that was not carried out in the final version.[163]

Leonardo did not avoid the use of gold brocade only in his portraits. According to the contract for the *Virgin of the Rocks*, drawn up in 1483, Leonardo and the De Predis brothers were to dress the Virgin Mary in a cloak of red gold brocade with a lining of green gold brocade and a *camora* of the same fabric in blue painted with ultramarine.[164] The use of gold fabric must have been particularly important to the confraternity that ordered the painting, for it is among the very first stipulations of the contract. However, both versions of the altarpiece, now in the Louvre and the National Gallery, show Mary in plain drapery (figs. 12-13). Leonardo apparently preferred the play of light and shade created by the folds of a monochrome textile to a highly decorated fabric.

Comparison to Milanese court portraiture and inventories has shown that Leonardo replaced the heavy gold brocades with a lighter material, omitted parts of the ornamentation such as embroidered surfaces or borders, and included only a severely limited number of pieces of jewellery. This dates back to his time in Verrocchio's Florentine workshop, where Leonardo came into contact with ideas on beauty and plainness.[165] It was there that he also began studying drapery, which remained an important theme in his art theory throughout his life.[166] Although Leonardo does not portray the dress and jewellery owned by his sitters as naturalistically as other court painters, his focus on the sitter's face and his preference for lighter fabrics, revealing a body underneath through folds and creases, add to the beholder's sense of seeing a living person. This makes other Milanese court portraits, such as the profile of Bianca Maria Sforza, seem stiff and old fashioned. It is no coincidence that prominent art historians such as John

[161] Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131, without specifying which of the two ribbons is the later addition.
[162] London 2011, p. 113.
[163] Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131.
[164] 'Item la nostra donna nel mezzo. sia la vesta . de sopra. brocato doro azurlo tramarino / Item la camora brocato doro de lacha fina in cremisi. a olio / Item de la fodra dela vesta brocato doro verde a olio'. The contract has been published in extenso by Glasser 1977, p. 328-343.
[165] See chapter 2, the section entitled 'The poetics of plain dress', p. 60-65.
[166] The subject of drapery in Leonardo's later writings is discussed in chapter 5, p. 156-157.

Pope Hennessy and Cecil Gould regarded the *Lady with an Ermine* respectively as the first psychological portrait and the first modern portrait.[167] Or, as Leonardo put it himself: 'Draperies that clothe figures should show that they cover living figures' (app. 1, no. 15).

5.2. Dating the dress in the *Belle Ferronnière*

The previous section explained that Leonardo adjusted the rigid and formal court dress in his portraits. This obviously means that some restraint is required when dating these portraits on the basis of dress history. The results of technical analysis, such as underdrawing and alterations to dress, are in Leonardo's case an indispensable aid in dating the sitter's attire as accurately as possible. This can be beautifully illustrated in the case of the *Belle Ferronnière* (fig. 4). Technical analysis of the painting is being carried out at present, but some results have already been published, which allows me to draw some preliminary conclusions on the dating here.[168]

An infrared reflectogram of the *Belle Ferronnière* has revealed the presence of pouncing marks around the eyes, nose and jaw.[169] Other lines, including the dress, were drawn free hand. The underdrawing also showed several modifications. The necklaces, which now fit rather tightly around the sitter's neck, reached a bit further down the chest, whereas the neckline was higher and narrower (fig. 88). As mentioned earlier, the presence of multiple horizontal lines suggests an elaborate ornament low on the chest. Finally, and most importantly for the painting's dating, is the observation that the underdrawing of the left sleeve reveals a narrower shape.

Many art historians have dated the *Belle Ferronnière* to c. 1495-1499. The sitter's dress, however, suggests an earlier date. In 1983 Teresa Binaghi Olivari noted the close resemblance of the *Belle Ferronnière*'s hairstyle, the way the *camicia* is pulled through slits at the armhole and the long silk ribbons to donor portraits on altarpieces dated to c. 1493-1494.[170] Although she admitted that the *Belle Ferronnière* has to be very close in date, she adhered to a date of c. 1496-1500, as favoured by most art historians at that time. However, the recent discovery of the underdrawing showing a tight-fitting sleeve, effectively rules out a date around 1500.

Tight sleeves were very fashionable in the first half of the 1490s. Examples are Ambrogio de Predis' portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, painted in 1493, and Beatrice's donor portrait in the Brera altarpiece, securely dated to c. 1494-1495 (figs. 62, 70). In 1494 Beatrice was also described as wearing 'very tight sleeves' in a letter by an anonymous Frenchman who attended the reception of Charles VIII of France in Asti.[171] Towards the end of the century, tight-fitting sleeves were replaced by wider models.[172] The *Portrait of a Woman*, attributed to Bernardino de' Conti and dated around 1500, and Boltraffio's Portrait of a Lady in Grey, dated c. 1498-1500, provide an accurate image (figs. 72, 87).f It is typical of Leonardo to have transformed the fashionable tight sleeve of his sitter into a wider model, because it allowed him to elaborate the circular pleats of the fabric around the upper arm. When taken at face value, the

---

[167] Pope-Hennessy 1966, p. 108-109; Gould 1975, p. 73. Although neither of them paid any attention to dress and drapery, they both recognized the life-like quality of the figure.
[168] Pascal Cotte of Lumière Technology is planning a publication on the results of technical research on the *Belle Ferronnière* in 2016 or 2017.
[169] Unfortunately, only a small part of the infrared reflectogram has been published, which means I rely here on the comments of Elisabeth Ravaud and Myriam Eveno, published in: Ravaud and Eveno 2014, p. 131.
[170] Her main comparison is an altarpiece, known as the *Madonna delle rose*, by Bernardo Zenale (Oleggio, Museo d'arte religiosa). Binaghi Olivari 1983, p. 650.
[171] See p. 80-81 of this chapter, note 63.
[172] See: Butazzi 1983, p. 59.

wide sleeve suggests a slightly later date for the costume. The underdrawing, however, seems to confirm Binaghi Olivari's suggested date of c. 1493-1494, which coincides with the date that Luke Syson proposed on stylistic grounds.[173]

An early date for the *Belle Ferronnière* has implications for the identification of the sitter. Lucrezia Crivelli became Ludovico's mistress in 1495. Although it cannot be said with absolute certainty that the painting was executed around that time, especially without the visual evidence of an infrared reflectogram, it is not very likely that the portrait represents Lucrezia. The evidence now suggests that Beatrice is the most likely sitter. The physiognomic resemblance to Gian Cristoforo Romano's Louvre bust and to her effigy in Certosa di Pavia as well as the early date point to her (figs. 65-66). Further technical research, especially on the dress ornamentation revealed in the infrared reflectogram, could facilitate a more definite conclusion on this issue.

Several details make the *Belle Ferronnière*'s dress slightly more luxurious than Cecilia Gallerani's, an indication that the sitter is of higher rank (fig. 3). The sitter's bodice is decorated with a pattern of gold strips, a belt accentuating the waistline is just visible behind the parapet, and her *lenza* is adorned with a jewel (fig. 4). Leonardo also paid considerable attention to the rendering of the embroidered band along the neckline. Whereas the embroidered *fantasia dei vinci* motif on the bodice, neckline and sleeve of Cecilia Gallerani's garment are simply interlaced lines, the palmette border of the *Belle Ferronnière* is painted in a far more illusionistic way, showing twisted gold cord and suggesting the thickness of the embroidery stitches. This does not necessarily mean that the embroidered decoration was painted from life and the portrait as a consequence shows the sitter's own dress. Leonardo had already used the very same palmette motif as a border on the blue overgown of his *Madonna of the Carnation* (fig. 10). These palmettes therefore seem to be one of his stock motifs for decoration, similar to the *fantasia dei vinci*. Notwithstanding the slightly more sumptuous ornamentation of the *Belle Ferronnière* in comparison to Leonardo's earlier portraits, the sitter's dress is still a far cry from Milanese courtly attire. If the sitter is indeed Beatrice, her apparel is astonishingly simple for a duchess, especially for one so interested in fashion. It shows that Leonardo adhered to his vision of female beauty even when portraying sitters of the highest rank.

6.1. Leonardo and personal adornment

In his writings on painting, Leonardo argued against depicting rich ornamentation. As my research has shown thus far, he applied this idea to the portraits he painted, adjusting sumptuous court dress accordingly, and to religious paintings such as the *Virgin of the Rocks*, in which he omitted the requested gold brocaded fabrics. In the literature on dress history, however, Leonardo's recommendations are usually not regarded as a theory on painting, but rather as advice on how to dress properly, placed against the background of religious attacks on ostentatious dress.[174] Did he truly advocate dressing down as an ethical principle with implications beyond the artistic?

It is highly unlikely that Leonardo was inspired by any moral condemnation of lavish dress. As in any other time or place, in fifteenth-century Italy voices against ostentatious dress were heard, especially in a religious context. Preachers like Bernardino of Siena and, towards the end of the century, Girolamo Savonarola condemned extravagant dress and display.[175] However,

[173] Luke Syson in: London 2011, p. 123.
[174] Herald 1981, p. 158 and Gnignera 2010, p. 195 both discuss Leonardo's ideas in relation to religious condemnations of cosmetics and finery by people like Savonarola.
[175] On preaching against women's vanities in Italy and its rather limited effect, see: Izbicki 1989, p. 211-234.

they represent only a small minority and their ideas did not permeate society as a whole. Like his contemporaries, Leonardo had nothing against dressing in rich attire. Bernardo Vecchietti described Leonardo as a very handsome man, wearing 'a rose-coloured cloak which came only to his knees, although at the time long vestments were the custom; a beautiful head of hair down to middle of his breast, in ringlets and well arranged.'[176] Leonardo's cloak must have been rather costly, since rose colour was produced from kermes, the most expensive of dyes. From this description a picture emerges of a somewhat vain man, carefully coiffed and clad in extravagant clothes, and having no fear of the limelight.[177]

Leonardo considered it an advantage that a painter, unlike a sculptor, could dress beautifully even when at work. Discussing the different natures of painting and sculpting, he described how painting is mainly a mental exercise, whereas sculpting is physical and dirty. In Leonardo's opinion, the sculptor is always dusty like a baker because of his manual labour and he has to work in a dirty and noisy workshop. The painter on the other hand works in a completely different way, 'because the painter sits in front of his work at great ease, well-dressed and wielding the lightest brush with charming colours. His clothing is ornamented according to his pleasure, and his house is filled with charming paintings, and clean […]'.[178] *Fare bella figura* was unmistakably of great importance to Leonardo.

Leonardo's purchases of cloth and haberdasheries for new clothes for his pupil Salaì reveal the same love of finery. For fifteen *lire* and four *soldi* he bought four *braccia* of silver tissue for a cloak. He spent another nine *lire* on green velvet to trim it and also bought ribbons and little rings to decorate it (app. 2A). Even more was spent on a pair of rose-coloured hose for Salaì, which cost three gold ducats (app. 2B). It was quite common for a master to pay for his apprentice's clothing as a form of salary, but usually the amount spent would not allow the apprentice to dress as sumptuously as Salaì did. In December 1453, for instance, the Florentine painter Neri di Bicci noted in his *ricordanze* the acquisition of 'seven *braccia* of green-brown [cloth] to make a cloak for Cosimo who is learning the art of painting with me'.[179] Cosimo's cheap brownish cloak makes a huge contrast to the silver one Salaì received from his master.

Not only did Leonardo dress himself and his apprentices well, he also made several designs for fancy costume and fashionable accessories, like a pendant, a belt buckle and a bag (figs. 89-91).[180] The drawing of the pendant, formerly in the Christ Church Collection in Oxford but now unfortunately lost, is an example of the popular *groppi* or *fantasia dei vinci* motif. The

---

[176] 'un pitoccho rosato, corto sino al ginocchio, che allora s'usavano i vestiri lunghi; aveva sino al mezzo in petto una bella capellaia, et inanellata, et ben composta.' Von Fabriczy 1893, p. 90. Translation by Martin Clayton in: London 2002, p. 110, 158.

[177] On the basis of the expenditure on dress Leonardo listed in his notebooks (see: app. 2C), Monnas argued that he, like other Florentine painters, dressed rather modestly. Monnas 2009, p. 34-35. Being in court service, however, Leonardo would have regularly received dress fabric for garments from the ducal wardrobe, as Ambrogio de Predis did earlier (see note 8 of this chapter). For more examples of artists being supplied with dress by the court, see: Warnke 1985, p. 164-166.

[178] 'imperoché 'l pittore con grand aggio siede dinanzi alla sua opera ben vestito et move il levissimo penello con li vaghi colori, et ornato di vestimenti come a lui paice, et l'habbitataziobe sua piena di vaghe pitture, et pulita [...]', Transcription and translation: Farago 1992, p. 256-257, no. 36, lines 16-21.

[179] 'bracc[i] sette di verde bruno per fare 1° mantello a Chosimo istà mecho a dipigniere', 7 December 1453. Cited from: Bicci 1976, p. 9-10. Translation: Thomas 1995, p. 78-79. See also: Monnas 2009, p. 330-331 for an overview of all of Neri Bicci's purchases of cloth. Neri di Bicci was not a high-end painter like Leonardo and his prices were lower than his contemporaries, but his business was very successful and he was one of the richest Florentine painters, as evinced by his tax declaration of 1480. See: Holmes 2003, p. 214.

[180] Venturelli 1994, p. 113. On Leonardo's activities as a designer of court spectacles, see also: Perissa Torrini 2013, p. 200-209.

motif appears several times in other designs by Leonardo, for instance in the description of a costume for dressing up for a carnival, written in 1497:

A costume for the carnival / To make a beautiful costume take a supple cloth and give it an odoriferous varnish, made of oil of turpentine and of varnish; ingrain and glue with a pierced stencil, which must be wetted, that it may not stick to the cloth; and this stencil may be made in a pattern of knots which afterwards may be filled up with black and the ground with white millet.[181]

In this regard, four drawings of fancy dress in the Royal Collection are interesting as well (figs. 92-95). They show masquerade costumes that are elaborately decorated with ribbons, dagged edges and intricate patterns, exactly those ornaments that Leonardo disapproved of in his writings (app. 1, no. 8).[182]

Notwithstanding his own recommendation to avoid ornamentation and dress figures plainly in pictures, Leonardo himself dressed nicely and more than once designed accessories and costumes for court events. A clear distinction should be made between his ideas on dress in painting and dress in his personal life. To Leonardo it was important that a picture's aesthetic value be preserved through time, hence his advice to painters to avoid excessive ornamentation and the fads of their own day. In his daily life, however, he dressed as elegantly, or perhaps even more elegantly, as any his contemporaries.

6.2. Dress and decorum

This chapter has compared Milanese court fashion and portraiture with Leonardo's depiction of dress in the *Lady with an Ermine* and the *Belle Ferronnière*. Milanese sources unmistakably reveal the importance of lavish dress and splendour at court, which permeated court portraiture. Leonardo, however, portrayed his sitters in decidedly plain dress, breaking away from the heavy and stiff court fashions and parting with the rigid profile view formula. Notwithstanding Leonardo's adjustments to garments and accessories, dress history has proven to be of crucial help in dating both Milanese portraits more precisely, especially when taking into account the results of scientific examination of the paintings.

Although the depiction of dress in Leonardo's Milanese portraits echoes his theory, in which the study of drapery from nature occupies a central place, there is one other important element at play here. The issue of decorum in painting is illustrated both by Alberti and Leonardo himself through a dress example. Alberti writes:

Everything should also conform to a certain dignity. It is not suitable for Venus or Minerva to be dressed in military cloaks; and it would be improper for you to dress Jupiter or Mars in women's clothes. The early painters took care when representing Castor and Pollux so that, though they looked like twins, you could tell one was a fighter and the other very agile. They also made Vulcan's limp show beneath his clothing, so great was their attention to representing what was necessary according to function, kind and dignity.[183]

---

[181] 'Vesta da carnovale / Per fare vna bella veste togli tela sottile e dale vernice odorrifera, fatta da olio di tremētina e vernice; ingrana e ī colla stanpa traforata e bagnata, acciò nō si appicchi, e questa stāpa sia fatta a gruppi, i quali poi siē riēpivti di miglio nero e 'l cāpo di miglio biāco.' Paris I f. 49v; Transcription and translation: Richter no. 704.

[182] On the dating of the drawings and the events they might relate to, see: Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, p. 111-112. Leonardo's disapproval of garments with dagged edges in painting is discussed more extensively in chapter 5, p. 164-166.

[183] 'Tum et pro dignitate omnia subsequantur oportet. Nam Venerem aut Minervam saga indutam esse minime convenit. Iovem aut Martem veste muliebri indecenter vestires. Castorem et Pollucem prisci

Leonardo's remarks on decorum derive from the same tradition. He instructs painters, according to the standards of his days, to 'observe decorum in clothing your figures according to their station and their age', (app. 1, no. 19), and elsewhere he adds (app. 1, no. 8):

> The garments of figures should be in keeping with age and decorum; that is an old man should wear a long robe and a young man should be adorned with a garment which does not extend above the shoulders, except for those who have professed religion.

Like other fifteenth-century writers, Leonardo stressed the importance of dressing figures in a way appropriate to their status. As we have seen, in the Renaissance status and displays of riches, especially involving dress and jewellery, were inextricably bound up with each other. Beatrice d'Este was publicly criticized for wearing a headdress that was considered too modest. A duchess was expected to dress like a duchess. Ostentatious personal adornment was essential to court life as a primary means of social differentiation, in Milan even more so than at other Italian courts.

One wonders why a courtly patron, for whom luxury was crucial to his status and identity, would accept Leonardo's depiction of a sitter in relatively plain dress. Unfortunately we lack the sources to answer this question in the cases of the *Lady with an Ermine* and the *Belle Ferronnière*. In the winter of 1499, however, Leonardo left Milan for Mantua, where he would draw the portrait of one the most renowned Renaissance patrons, Isabella d'Este. The letters she exchanged with artists who worked for her, including Leonardo, have survived. The next chapter explores Isabella's relationship with Leonardo and formulates an answer to the question why even she accepted being portrayed without the jewellery and finery that were so crucial to her status.

---

pictores pingendo curabant ut, cum gemelli viderentur, in altero tamen pugilem naturam, in altero agilitatem discerneres. Tum et Vulcano claudicandi vitium apparere sub vestibus volebant, tantum illis erat studium pro officio, specie et dignitate quod oportet exprimere.' Alberti 1972, p. 76-77, Book II, 38.

4. Dressing and portraying Isabella d'Este

Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, has been thoroughly studied as a collector and patron of the arts.[1] She employed the finest painters of her day, including Bellini, Mantegna and Perugino, to decorate her *studiolo* and she was an avid collector of antiquities. She also asked Leonardo to paint her likeness but though Leonardo drew a preparatory cartoon when he was in Mantua in 1499, now in the Louvre, he would never complete a portrait (fig. 5).

Although Isabella is as well known for her love of fashion as her patronage, little has been written about the dress she wears in this cartoon. Like most of Leonardo's female sitters, Isabella is portrayed without any jewellery. The only art historian to elaborate on this subject was Attilio Schiaparelli in 1921. Going against the *communis opinio*, he posited that the sitter could not be identified as Isabella d'Este. He considered the complete lack of ornamentation to be inappropriate for a marchioness and therefore believed the sitter to be someone of lesser status than Isabella.[2] However, the sitter is now unanimously identified as Isabella d'Este.[3]

The importance of splendour was discussed at length in the previous chapter. Remarkably, Isabella is portrayed even more plainly than Cecilia Gallerani and the sitter of the *Belle Ferronnière*, both of whom are shown wearing at least a necklace (figs. 3-4). The high degree of finish of Isabella's cartoon suggests it was completed and the absence of jewellery is intentional. This raises the question who took the lead when decisions were made on the dress shown in the portrait. In an article on Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani and the cartoon of Isabella, David Alan Brown put it simply: 'In one respect, the sitter's involvement was automatic: like Cecilia Gallerani, she [Isabella d'Este] chose to be portrayed in the latest fashion […]'.[4] However, there are no contemporary sources on either of these portraits that provide straightforward confirmation of this statement and it seems unlikely that it was Isabella's idea to pose for Leonardo without jewellery.

The previous chapter concentrated on ceremonial court dress and its depiction in portraiture, both by Leonardo and by other court artists. In this chapter, the focus shifts from painter to patron, in a broader sense of the term, that is, Isabella d'Este as a patron of portraits and of fashion. Isabella's correspondence with her agents and members of other courts in Italy and beyond was carefully kept in the archives in Mantua and provides a pivotal source of information on her commissions of portraits and dress.[5] This enables us to reconstruct her attitude towards dress and jewellery as well as her relationship with artists in general and Leonardo in particular. Much work has already been done in both fields. Early in the twentieth century, Alessandro Luzio assembled the archival references on Isabella's dress as well as her

[1] See especially: Campbell 2004, with extensive bibliography.
[2] Schiaparelli 1921, p. 157.
[3] Most recently: Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 119-125 and Paris 2012, p. 232, cat. 76. Syson noticed a physical resemblance between the cartoon and the marriage medal of Isabella and Francesco Gonzaga, presumably one of the few reliable likenesses of Isabella, see: Syson 1997, p. 283.
[4] Brown 1990, p. 57.
[5] Unlike other women, Isabella kept her own *copialettere*, which was usually a male practice. The Mantuan archivist and historian Alessandro Luzio (1857-1946) published large parts of this material. On Luzio's approach and the subsequent historiography of the research on Isabella d'Este, see: Kolsky 1984, p. 47-49.

portraits and made a preliminary overview of the surviving paintings.[6] Francis Ames-Lewis recently published a monograph on Isabella's relationship with Leonardo, and Evelyn Welch has studied how Isabella purchased her finery.[7] This is the first time, however, that both fields of painting and applied arts have been analysed in relation to each other, in order to determine why a courtly patron would have agreed to be portrayed in relatively plain dress.

1. The commission

Isabella was already familiar with Leonardo's paintings before he visited Mantua. She had seen his work during her visits to her sister Beatrice in Milan and was certainly familiar with the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, now known as the *Lady with an Ermine* (fig. 3).[8] In an often-cited letter, written in Mantua on 26 April 1498, she asked Cecilia Gallerani to send her the picture, because she wanted to compare it with some portraits by Bellini:

> Having seen today some fine portraits by the hand of Giovanni Bellini, we thought of the works of Leonardo and we wished we could compare them with these paintings, and as we remember that he painted your likeness, we beg you to be so good as to send us your portrait by this messenger whom we have dispatched on horseback, so that we may not only be able to compare the works of the two masters but also may have the pleasure of seeing your face again. As soon as we have made the comparison, [the portrait] will be returned to you [...].[9]

Cecilia replied three days later:

> I have read your Highness's letter, and since you wish to see my portrait I am sending it; I would send it with greater pleasure if it were more like me. But your Highness must not think that this is due to any defect in the master himself, for in truth I believe there is no painter equal to him, but only because the portrait was painted when I was very young. I have since then changed altogether, so much so that if you saw the picture and me together no one would imagine it could be meant for me.[10]

Isabella appears to have returned the portrait to Cecilia about a month later. A short letter of thanks from Cecilia to Isabella, dated 18 May 1498, survives.[11] Although it is not known which portraits by Bellini Isabella was referring to, nor what the outcome of the comparison was,

---

[6] On Isabella's dress, see: Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 441-469. For the portraits, see: Luzio 1900a, p. 344-359, 427-442, republished in revised form in: Luzio 1913, p. 183-238.

[7] Ames-Lewis 2012; Welch 2005, p. 245-273.

[8] It is not certain whether Isabella saw *The Last Supper* during her visit to Beatrice in 1495, since work was still in progress. *The Virgin of the Rocks* and other works executed for Ludovico and his circle were accessible to Isabella. See: Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 35.

[9] 'Essendone hogi accaduto vedere certi belli retracti de man de Zoanne Bellino siamo venute in ragionamento de le opere de Leonardo cum desiderio de vederle al parangone di queste havemo, et ricordandone che 'l v'ha retracta voi dal naturale vi pregamo che per il presente cavallaro, quale mandiamo a posta per questo, ne vogliati mandare esso vostro retracto, perchè ultra che 'l ne satisfarà al parangone vederemo anche voluntieri il vostro volto et subito facta la comparatione vi lo rimetteremo […]' Isabella d'Este to Cecilia Gallerani, Mantua, 26 April 1498. Luzio 1888a, p. 45. Translation cited from: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 49.

[10] 'Ho visto quanto la Signoria Vostra mi ha scripto circa al haver caro de vedere il ritratto mio; qual mando a quella, et più voluntiera lo mandarla quanto asimigliasse a me; et non creda già la Signoria Vostra ch'el proceda per difecto del Maestro, et invero credo non se trova a lui uno paro, ma solo è per esser fatto esso ritratto in una età si imperfecta, et io poi ho cambiato tutta quella effigie; talmente che vedere epso et me tutto insieme non è alcuno che lo giudica essere fatto per me.' Cecilia Gallerani to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 29 April 1498. Luzio 1888b, p. 181. Translation cited from: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 49-50.

[11] Published in: Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 224-225, with references to previous publications.

Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia must have pleased her, since she made every effort to persuade Leonardo to paint her likeness as well.

Political circumstances in 1499 provided an opportunity for Isabella to realise her intent. In 1498 the king of France, Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498), was succeeded by Louis XII (r. 1498-1515), who immediately laid claim to the Duchy of Milan. Left without allies, Ludovico Sforza fled Milan on 2 September 1499, four days before French troops entered the city. No longer employed in court service, Leonardo decided to leave. On 14 December he deposited 600 gold florins in his Florentine bank account and must have left Milan shortly after. He went to Venice, stopping along the way to visit the court of Francesco Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este in Mantua, where he probably arrived in late December 1499.[12]

In Mantua, Leonardo made at least two portrait drawings of Isabella. He took one of them with him to Venice, where he showed it to Lorenzo da Pavia, an instrument maker who regularly worked for Isabella. On 13 March 1500, Lorenzo sent Isabella a lute with an accompanying letter in which he refers to the portrait drawing: 'Leonardo da Vinci is in Venice and has shown me a portrait of Your Ladyship that is very lifelike. It is very well done, it could not possibly be better.'[13] Leonardo left another drawing in Mantua, as can be concluded from a letter from Isabella to her agent Fra Pietro da Novelara, written in March 1501. She asks Pietro to find out if Leonardo is in Florence and, if so, to urge him to paint something for her *studiolo*. She then explains that her husband has given away Leonardo's drawing and that she would like to have another: 'And then you should ask him if he would send me another sketch of my portrait, for his Excellency my husband has given away the one he left for me here'.[14]

One of these two drawings must have been the cartoon that is now in the collection of the Louvre (fig. 5).[15] The drawing shows Isabella's upper body in a three-quarter pose and her head in profile view. Both David Alan Brown and Francis Ames-Lewis have noted the resemblance to Isabella's portrait medal that was made by Gian Cristoforo Romano in 1498 (fig. 96). Isabella was extremely satisfied with this medal and distributed it among her friends for many years. She kept a luxury version in her *grotta*, executed in gold with a frame decorated with her name in diamonds (fig. 97). Isabella presumably wanted her portrait by Leonardo to have an 'all'antica' appearance, reflecting the dignity of antique coins, and may have asked Leonardo to use her medallic portrait as an example.[16]

There is a drawn copy of Leonardo's portrait in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (fig. 98). Francis Ames-Lewis believes that this version is a contemporary workshop copy and

---

[12] Pietro Marani in: DBI vol. 64 (2005), s.v. 'Leonardo da Vinci', p. 448. On the fall of Ludovico, see: Gino Benzoni in: DBI, vol. 66 (2007), s.v. 'Ludovico (Ludovico Maria) Sforza, detto il Moro, duca di Milano', p. 441-442.

[13] '…E là a Venecia Lionardo Vinci, el quale m'a mostrato uno retrato de la S.a V.a che è molto naturale a quela. Sta tanto bene fato, non è posibile melio.' Beltrami 1919, p. 63 doc. 103; Brown 1982, p. 51 doc. 29.

[14] 'A presso lo pregerà ad volerne mandare un altro schizzo del retratto nostro, peroché lo illustrissimo signore nostro consorte ha donato via quello ch'el ce lasso qua.' Isabella d'Este to Pietro da Novelara, Mantua, 27 March 1501. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 227-228. Isabella may have meant a copy of the original drawing, but Brown suggests Leonardo made several drawings and sketches, which means he could provide her with another original. See: Brown 1990, p. 54. On the possible existence of a third drawing, see also Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 117-118, who assumes only two originals were in circulation.

[15] First stated by: Yriarte 1888, p. 130-131.

[16] Brown also mentions a second possible visual source: Isabella possessed a cast of a bronze statuette after the *Apollo Belvedere*, by a sculptor named Antico. From the main view point, Apollo's body is shown in a frontal view and the head faces right, exactly like Isabella in her portrait. Brown 1990, p. 58-60; Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 135.

therefore the second drawing mentioned in the correspondence.[17] Françoise Viatte, on the other hand, acknowledges the close relationship between the two drawings, but regards it as a later, sixteenth-century copy after Leonardo.[18] This seems more likely, since Carmen Bambach pointed out that the pricked outlines are very neat and regular, which is unlike Leonardo. He used to prick the physiognomic details carefully, but only roughly indicated the outlines of dress and drapery, just like Verrocchio as it happens. Moreover, the pieces of paper glued to the back of the sheet during a later restoration have been pricked as well. This shows the drawing must have been pricked and copied at a later date.[19] Nonetheless, the drawing in the Ashmolean Museum is a welcome addition, for the Louvre sheet has suffered severe water damage and has been cut down at the bottom. The Ashmolean copy shows that Isabella's hands were originally resting on a parapet and she was pointing with her right index finger at a book in front of her.

2.1. 'The source and origin of all the pretty fashions in Italy'

Leonardo portrayed Isabella in a dress that is cut according to the latest fashion (fig. 5). The bodice of her *camora* (dress) is decorated with strips in a contrasting colour, as is the *camicia* that is visible at her cleavage. The sleeves of Isabella's dress are ample and her *camicia* puffs up through slits at the shoulders. In the Ashmolean drawing, bows have been added at the shoulder (fig. 98). Although hardly discernible in the Louvre sheet these days, several sixteenth-century copies, one of which is in the British Museum, show that her head is covered with a light veil with a crimped edge (fig. 99).[20] In the original cartoon, the *lenza* that keeps this veil in place is indicated as a bright line around the head (fig. 5).

A *camora* that is decorated in a very similar way as in the cartoon is described in a letter from Isabella to her chamberlain Alberto da Bologna. In early December 1492, Isabella was staying with her mother in Ferrara. She needed more dresses and had requested Alberto to send her a new *camora*. When he did not reply quickly enough to her liking, she sent him a punchy letter:

> It seems to me that you not only lost your memory because of everything you say you are doing there, but also that the evil that has turned upon you took away your brain or robbed you of your eyes so that you cannot read. And therefore we carefully repeat what we want, now that we know that you cannot understand the text without explanation. Take from the wardrobe the piece of fabric of wide strips in dark grey and murrey satin that we have had made in Venice, and have a *camora* cut from it with strips on the chest in the French way, also at the sleeves, and have it decorated with black velvet, and have black ribbons put on it that are as long as the ones we attached to the *camora* of black velvet.[21]

---

[17] Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 118, 126-130.
[18] Viatte in: Paris 2003, p. 186.
[19] Bambach 1999, p. 111-112. Ames-Lewis noticed that the holes in the restored parts are slightly bigger than elsewhere on the sheet. He thinks that these parts were pricked a second time, with a bigger needle, after restoration.
[20] Observation of Viatte 1999, p. 6. Compare Welch 2008, p. 247, who inaccurately states that Isabella's hair is uncovered. The British Museum drawing belongs to a group of four portrait drawings of Isabella d'Este in red chalk. Two are now in the Graphische Sammlung in Munich and the fourth is in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi (inv. no.419E).
[21] 'Me pare che non solamente habbi perso la memoria per la cascata che dici facesti qua, ma che el male che hai adosso te abbia anche privo di cervello o che ti abbi cavato li occhi, che non possi legere. Et però havemo voluto replicarti minutamene quello che volemo, dopo che cognossemo che non intendi il testo senza commento. Togli fora de salvarobba el cavezo de raso berettino et morello da le liste larghe che facessimo fare a Venetia, et in esso fa tagliare una camora che abbia le bande al pecto a la francese, fodrate de veluto negro et cusi alle maneghe, facendola ornare pur de veluto negro, et gli farai mettere le stringhe negre che siano longhe como furono quelle che nui aconzassimo a la camora de veluto negro.' Isabella

In a second letter, written on 13 December, after having received the desired *camora*, Isabella reassured her agent that she had only been joking. Apart from the fact that these letters provide us with rare insights into the way Isabella dealt with her agents, they also give a rather detailed description of the type of dress she is wearing in her portrait by Leonardo (fig. 5). In the portrait her dress is decorated with bold stripes on the bodice, has ribbons attached and is in the French style.

By 1500, the Spanish style had gradually disappeared in Northern Italy and given way to a new fashion that was more French in orientation.[22] One of the main changes was the form of the sleeves, which had been tight fitting in the 1490s. The queen of France, Anne of Brittany, was already wearing dresses with wider sleeves at that time. In the royal accounts of 1492, which list the purchases of lengths of velvet and satin for the queen's gowns, there are multiple mentions of dresses 'with big, wide sleeves'.[23] A miniature from an Ovid manuscript shows Anne wearing this exact style (figs. 84). At the start of sixteenth century sleeves in northern Italy began to increase in volume as well, as is recorded in the *Portrait of a Woman* by Bernardino de' Conti and Boltraffio's *Portrait of a Lady in Grey*, both dated around 1500 (figs. 72, 87).

In the Louvre cartoon, Isabella's *camora* is cut according to latest fashion with wide sleeves 'a la francese'. To be dressed in the height of fashion was an absolute necessity for Isabella, since enormous value was attached to wearing the right clothes for the right occasion among the members of the Italian courts. Although Castiglione does not provide any literal prescription for a court lady's wardrobe, in his *Libro del cortegiano* he describes the kind of dress the ideal court lady wears and the attitude she should have towards her clothing:

> Moreover, she must make her dress conform to this intent [shyness and a noble shame], and must clothe herself in such a way as not to appear vain and frivolous. But since women are not only permitted but bound to care more about beauty than men – and there are several sorts of beauty – this Lady must have the good judgement which are the garments that enhance her grace and are most appropriate to the exercises in which she intends to engage at a given time, and choose these. And when she knows that hers is a bright and cheerful beauty, she must enhance it with movements, words and dress that tend to the cheerful; just as another who senses that her own style is the gentle and grave ought to accompany it with like manners, in order to increase what is a gift of nature. Thus if she is a little stouter or thinner than normal, or fair or dark, let her help herself in her dress, but in as hidden a way as possible; and all the while she keeps herself dainty and clean, let her appear to have no care or concern for this.[24]

---

d'Este to Alberto da Bologna, Ferrara, early December 1492. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 454. For Isabella's whereabouts, see: Cartwright 1903, vol. 1, p. 65. Note that Cartwright places this letter too early in the chronology, suggesting that it was written in Milan in September 1492.

[22] As noted in the previous chapter, there are sources suggesting that French styles were already being worn at the northern Italian courts in the early 1490s. See chapter 3, p. 95-97. This letter from Isabella to Alberto da Bologna, dated 1492, is yet another indication.

[23] 'a grans manches larges', published in: Le Roux de Lincy 1860, vol. 4, p. 90-92, nos. 2, 4, 8.

[24] 'Deve ancor accommodar gli abiti a questa intenzione e vestirsi di sorte, che non paia vana e leggera. Ma perché alle donne è licito e debito aver più cura della bellezza che agli omini e diverse sorti sono di bellezza, deve questa donna aver iudicio di conoscer quai sono quegli abiti che le accrescon grazia e più accommodati a quelli esercizi ch'ella intende di fare in quel punto, e di quelli servirsi; e conoscendo in sé una bellezza vaga ed allegra, deve aiutarla coi movimenti, con le parole e con gli abiti, che tutti tendano allo allegro; cosí come un'altra, che si senta aver maniera mansueta e grave, deve ancor accompagnarla con modi di quella sorte, per accrescer quello che è dono della natura. Così, essendo un poco più grassa o più magra del ragionevole, o bianca o bruna, aiutarsi con gli abiti, ma dissimulatamente più che sia possibile; e tenendosi delicata e polita, mostrar sempre di non mettervi studio o diligenzia alcuna.' Castiglione 1972, p. 215-216, Book III, 8. Translation: Castiglione 2002, p. 154.

According to Castiglione a true court lady had to possess a natural ability to adorn herself in such a way as to highlight her own personal qualities without being excessive or showing any effort.

Though it was Isabella's sister-in-law Elisabetta Gonzaga (1471-1525) who, as one of the main female characters in the *Libro del cortegiano,* was presented by Castiglione as a role model for any lady, in real life it was Isabella who set the tone for court fashions. She was famous, not only in Italy but throughout Europe, for knowing how to dress properly and, above all, fashionably. Even the king of France, François I (r. 1515-1547), asked Isabella to send him a fashion doll, dressed exactly the way she was so that he could clothe the ladies of his court in the same way.[25] Time and again Isabella received letters from other noblewomen wishing to wear fashions she had invented. In 1506, for instance, the Marchioness of Cotrona, Eleonora del Balzo-Orsini, asked for one of Isabella's *camore* as an example for her daughter, whereupon Isabella sent the dress and a letter with instructions to the Gonzaga ambassador in Rome:

Your chancellor told me on behalf of the Marchioness of Cotrona that she wishes to have one of my *camore* to show to her daughter, who will serve the queen of Aragon. We have one of yellow velvet with strips of silver tissue and lined with blue silk for the chancellor that you can present to him in our name.[26]

Another request was made in 1523 by the queen of Poland, Bona Sforza (1494-1557), who exchanged gifts with Isabella. After receiving some gold and silver hairnets from Mantua, Bona sent Isabella several pieces of fur with an accompanying letter to thank her:

Via the nephew of the Royal barber we have had a letter from Your Ladyship and six silk and gold hairnets in the latest fashion […] we pray your Ladyship to let us know when some new style of binding the head arises and to send us one that is pretty and pleases you and therefore cannot displease us, for we are sure you never miss anything as Your Ladyship is the source and origin of all the pretty fashions in Italy.[27]

Isabella even supervised the production of new garments for other women. In 1533 she sent a letter to Caterina Cibo Varano (1501-1557), duchess of Camerino, about certain dresses she was having made for her and Renée of France (1510-1574). Renée, daughter of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany, had married Isabella's nephew Ercole II d'Este in 1528 and

[25] 'una puva vestita a la fogia che va lei di camisa, di maniche, de veste di sotto e di sopra et de abiliamenti et aconciatura de testa et de li capilli [...], perché S. M.tà designa far fare alcuni di quelli habiti per donare a donnein Franza.', Federigo Gonzaga to Isabella d'Este on behalf of Francis I, 15 November 1515. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 466. For an analysis of this request from a gender perspective, see: Croizat 2007, p. 94-130.

[26] 'Il vostro cancelliere me ha dicto da parte de la sig.a Marchesa di Cotrona che la desideria avere una de le nostre camore per monstra per sua figliola, che viene cum la regina de Aragona; avemone facto dare una al dicto cancellere de veluto leonato listata de tela de arzento et fodrata de cendale alexandrino, qual gli fareti presentare da nostra parte.', Isabella d'Este to Fioramonte Brognolo, Mantua, 12 October 1506. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 454-455.

[27] 'Per il nepote del barbiere regio habbemo a questi dì passati una lettera de Vostra Signoria et per essa sei scuffioti de seta et de oro de nova foggia […] per tanto pregamo Vostra Signoria se contenta quando qualche nova foggia di abendare la testali occorerà, che semo certissimo non mancarne mai per essere Vostra Signioria fonte et origine de tucte le belle foggie d'Italia, de mandarne qualche una bella et che li piaccia, che a noi similmente non potrà dispiacere.' Bona Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Cracow, 15 June 1523. Luzio and Renier 1896d, p. 267.

became duchess of Ferrara in 1534. Isabella ensured Caterina that this task was in good hands with her:

I want you to know that the work on the garments has started, and I hope that they will turn out well, both because my wish to see them in all their beauty is infinite and because there are persons in this city who have a knowledge of embroidery like nowhere else in Italy, so the exquisite Lady of Orléans [Renée of France] and Your Excellency will be satisfied.[28]

She finished the letter with the promise that the masters would finish the garments with the greatest speed one could imagine. Requests like these to use Isabella's dresses as an example or to have her order new dresses show Isabella's great reputation as an inventor of new fashions.

The vast correspondence between Isabella and her agents reveals how she made sure she was continuously supplied with the best fabrics and latest novelties. In a letter written in July 1490, she instructed Girolamo Zigliolo to buy eight *braccia* of the best crimson satin he could find and to search in Venice for the best *zibellini* (sable) to line a *sbernia* (cloak), of which he had to buy eighty skins, and one with the skull still inside to wear in her hands, even if he had to search all over town for it.[29] He probably had to do exactly that, as *zibellini*, the pelts of a furred animal, most often sable and worn as an accessory, were a rather new fashion at the end of the fifteenth century.[30]

When ordering the *zibellini*, Isabella informed her agent she did not mind the cost as long as the fur was beautiful. A year later, in 1491, when Zigliolo was about to leave to France, Isabella again sent him a shopping list along with a hundred ducats, telling him:

I wish you to understand that you are not to return the money if any of it is left, after buying the things that I want, but are to spend it in buying some gold chain or anything else that is new and elegant. And if more is required, spend that too, for I had rather be in your debt so long as you bring me the latest novelties.[31]

Even though Isabella often experienced financial hardship, money was evidently not an issue here.[32] She lists everything Zigliolo was to look out for: engraved amethysts, rosaries of black amber and gold, blue cloth to make a *camora* and black cloth for a *sbernia* that was so beautiful it would be incomparable to anything else in the world and might cost up to ten ducats a *braccia*, if

---

[28] 'Voglio che sappi già essersi dato principio a lavorar le vesti, et spero che habbino tutte a riuscir tali et perchè il desiderio che tengo di vederle di tutta bellezza è infinito et perchè in questa cittade sono persone che in recamare hanno quella scientia che habbino altri in Italia, che la p.ta M.ma di Orliens et V.S. rimaranno satisfatte.' Isabella d'Este to to Caterina Cibo Varano, Mantua, 19 August 1533. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 465-466.

[29] Published by: Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 455.

[30] Sherill 2006, p. 121-122.

[31] 'protestandove che non habiati a retornare alcuno indreto, perchè comparate queste cose, s'el ve restasse denari in mane, spendeteli in qualche cadenella o cosa gallante et nova, et in quello vui judicareti ce habia a gustare. Et se questi denari non bastaranno, meteteli de li vostri, che subito ve li restuiremo et saremo più contenta che esser vostra debitrice che creditrice, purchè ne portati diverse gallanterie, ma in specie questo sone le cose che volemo.' Isabella d'Este to Girolamo Zigliolo, April 1491. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 453. Translation cited from: Cartwright 1903, vol. 1, p. 72.

[32] Isabella often had difficulty paying for all her expenses. For instance Antonio Salimbeni, a Mantuan living in Venice, requested Isabella to send him some money, because 'ogni zorno ho questi mercadanti a le spalle et io le do buone parole, sperando che V. Ex.gli facia provisione.' Antonio Salimbeni to Isabella d'Este, Venice, 18 October 1494. Luzio and Renier 1896b, p. 310. On Isabella's financial situation, see further: Welch 2005, p. 253-258.

it was of excellent quality. She finishes her letter by instructing him to 'dig up something very elegant from under the earth, you could not do anything more wanted'.[33] To another agent, Giorgio Brognolo, she wrote:

We wish to have six to eight *braccia* of Rhenish linen that is so fine and beautiful that it is beyond comparison, because we already have a good quantity of the ordinary type. We wish you to search all of the warehouses in Venice to find the most beautiful and have it shown to your wife who will understand these things better than you. If you cannot find this amount of excellent material, send out a remant of two or three *braccia* and do not spare any expense because even if it costs a ducat a *braccia*, we do not care.[34]

Again and again Isabella asked her agents to look out for fashion novelties and to find her the best quality furs and fabrics, at any expense. The rivalry between Isabella and Beatrice over the embroiderer Jorba is also revealing. Jorba had previously served their mother Eleanor at the court of Ferrara and was considered not only a skilled craftsman but also an important advisor for embroidery patterns. After their mother's death, Isabella tried to obtain Jorba's services by offering him an annual salary of 200 ducats, a considerable sum at the time. However, Jorba eventually chose Beatrice over her.[35] Isabella may not have succeeded in employing Jorba, but she usually received whatever she wanted and made every possible effort to know and possess the latest fashion.

Isabella also made sure she kept abreast of other women's dress. When in 1501 a group of courtiers from Ferrara left for Rome to attend the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519) with Isabella's brother Alfonso d'Este (1476-1534), she asked one of the dignitaries, only known by his alias 'El Prete' (The Priest), to inform her about Lucrezia's dress and habits. El Prete promised to fulfil his task carefully and wrote in his first letter to Isabella: 'I will follow her Excellency Lady Lucrezia like a shadow does the body, and be sure that I will know what her footprint looks like and where I cannot draw from the eyes, I will go with my nose'.[36] After this first letter, he regularly sent descriptions of Lucrezia's dress and manners. Isabella's brother Ferrante served as a second informant, as can be concluded from a letter Isabella sent him to thank him for his efforts:

I could not be more satisfied than I am with the description of the various and diverse garments of the illustrious Lady our sister-in-law that Your Excellency minutely wrote for me yesterday. Therefore I thank

[33] 'Cavar de sotto terra qualche cosetta galantissima, che non ce potresti fare cosa più grata.' Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 453.
[34] 'Desideramo havere sei o octo braza de tela de renso che sia tanto fina et tanto bella che non habia parangone perché de la comune havemo in quantità. Volemo che faciati circare tutti li fontechi de Venezia per trovare la più bella et la faciati vedere a vostra moglie che se ne intenderà meglio de vui. Quando non se ne trovasse tanta in excellentia, se gli fusse qualche cavezetto avanzato de due o tre braza, mandatinela et non et non guardati a costo perché sebene costasse uno ducato al brazo, non se ne curaremo.' Isabella d'Este to Giorgio Brognolo, 5 August, 1496. Zaffanella 2000, p. 72. Translation cited with minor adaptions from: Welch 2005, p. 262-263.
[35] The name Jorba can also be found in the documents spelled as Jurba or Giurba. For the references to the letters concerning Jorba, see: Venturi 1885, p. 253-254; Ferrari 2008, p. 46.
[36] 'Io seguirò la ex. M.na Lucrezia come fa il corpo l'ombra, e siate certo che io vi saperò dire quanta stampa forma il suo pede in terra e dove li occhi non poterranno atingere io andarò col naso.' El Prete to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 12 October 1501, Luzio 1914, p. 535.

you immensely, and I beg you to persevere in your task in case the exquisite Lady varies her garments and dresses.[37]

Lucrezia Borgia was certainly not the only woman Isabella spied on. Although she remained in close contact with her sister Beatrice after marriage and exchanged dress designs and accessories with her, Isabella regularly had people reporting from Milan what her sister was wearing on various occasions. After all, her sister had a great reputation for fashion, being posthumously described as 'inventor of new dresses', and had much more money at her disposal.[38] A faithful informer of Isabella's was the Ferrarese courtier Bernardo Prosperi, whose report on the rivalry between Beatrice and mother Eleanor in dressing up their ladies on the occasion of a state visit to Venice in 1493 is cited in the previous chapter.[39] Isabella even asked her husband Francesco Gonzaga to satisfy her hunger for news about her sister's attire, although he did not consider himself the appropriate messenger for these subjects. During the same stay in Venice he described the ceremony that surrounded the visit and concluded his letter to Isabella with a short description of the appearance of her mother, sister and sister-in-law Anna: 'Of the ornaments the Ill. Lady Duchess [Eleanor], the Duchess of Bari [Beatrice] and Lady Anna had, we do not write anything else other than that they were all bedecked with very precious jewels, because it is beyond our profession.'[40]

Isabella and Beatrice were both deeply concerned with their dress. Throughout her lifetime, Isabella carefully maintained her image as the 'origin of fashions' through a broad network of family members and agents who supplied her with the latest fashion novelties and information on dress worn elsewhere. She spent large amounts of money on dress without hesitation. Gian Giorgio Trissino, who extolled Isabella's virtues in his *Ritratti*, published in 1524, stated that no other than Isabella knew how to spend her money on 'praiseworthy matters' such that it resulted in the virtue of *liberalità*, or generosity. He continued:

one can get a clear sense of her generosity from her splendid dress, the magnificent decoration of her house and the beautiful, delightful and almost divine artefacts, with some wonderful small rooms full of rare books, very beautiful paintings, marvellous antique sculpture, and modern as well that is just as good, cameos, *intagli*, medals and superior gems. And hence many other precious things and they are so rare in such abundance that they arouse immense pleasure and no little surprise at the same time for the viewers.[41]

---

[37] 'Io non poria restar meglio satifacta de quello che facio per il scriver che la S.V. me ha facto minutamente ne le sue del ultimo dil passato et secundo de questo de li varii et diversi habiti di quella ill.ma M.a nostra comune cognata. Siché la ringratio sumamente, et pregola ad persverare questo diligente suo officio in lo avvenire, secundo che la giornata la p.ta M.a varierà in vestimenti et habiti.' Isabella d'Este to Ferrante d'Este, Mantua, 14 January 1502. Luzio and Renier 1896c, p. 463-464.

[38] Beatrice was described as 'novarum vestium inventrix' by a Milanese chronicler after her death in 1497, cited from: Luzio and Renier 1890a, p. 88.

[39] See chapter 3, p. 79.

[40] 'De li ornamenti che le Ill.me Madama Duchessa, Madonna Duchessa de Bari et M.a Anna haveano, essendo fori della nostra professione, non scrivimo altro, se non che erano tutte piene de pretiosissime zoje.' Francesco Gonzaga to Isabella d'Este, Venice 27 May 1493. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 378. Even though Francesco was apparently not very interested in dress, Isabella did not hesitate to describe the appearance of the various gentlemen and ladies during the wedding celebrations of Lucrezia Borgia in several letters she wrote to her husband in January and February 1502. The letters are published by: Arco 1845, p. 300-309.

[41] 'le cose lodevoli'; 'questa sua liberalità si può chiaramente comprendere da le splendide sue vestimenta, da i paramenti di casa magnifici, e da le fabriche belle, dilettevoli, e quasi divine, con alcuni dolcisissimi camerini pieni di rarissimi libri, di picture bellissime, di antique sculture meravigliose, e di moderne, che si avicinano a quelle, di Camei, di tagli, di Medaglie, e di gemme elettisime. Et insomma di tante altre cose

Interestingly, Trissino regards Isabella's dress and her collection of art objects and antiquities as objects of equal status. Both serve the same purpose: they are an outward sign of Isabella's inner virtues.

2.2. Jewellery and honour

Isabella's letters testify to the importance of jewellery as well as her role as a leader in fashion. Jewellery was less subject to change than clothes and other accessories like fans or gloves were, and served as an important conveyor of dynastic honour. Isabella must have possessed a fine collection. In 1542, after the death of Isabella's son Federigo, who left an underage heir, the notary Edoardo Stivini drew up an inventory of Isabella's *grotta* and *studiolo*. First of all he recorded the jewellery of Isabella's daughter-in-law, duchess Margherita Paleologa (1510-1566), which probably included all the pieces that had originally belonged to Isabella.[42] It is an impressive list of twenty-five precious pieces, including a necklace with a hundred large pearls and a hundred small pearls, a balas ruby and a pearl the size of a hazelnut, a selection of thirty-two diamonds of various sizes and a head ornament shaped like a laurel leaf with eighty rubies.

For many years, however, Isabella was unable to wear most of her jewels. Her husband Francesco Gonzaga repeatedly suffered from a lack of money and in 1494 he needed a sum for a campaign to have his younger brother Sigismondo (1469-1425) elected as cardinal. On Francesco's request, Isabella agreed to pawn part of the jewellery she had brought into the marriage. Staying in Urbino for a visit to her sister-in-law Elisabetta Gonzaga, she sent Alberto da Bologna to Mantua with the key to the jewels. In an accompanying letter to Francesco, she explained she was offering her jewellery 'for the honour of Your Excellency and of the house'.[43] The following year, more of Isabella's jewels were pledged. The pawn contract was set to expire in 1496 so Isabella asked her father for help to get her jewellery back on 3 July of that year.[44] The attempt was in vain and a week later she turned to her husband, finishing her letter with the request:

> I pray you, please do all you can in order not to enter another pawn contract so that we can have the jewels now, both to keep them from danger of being lost and so that I can wear them in my youth, when they are most suitable. For if they were to be pawned for several more years now, I would not be able to make the best use of them, nor could I wear them to my honour.[45]

The initial reason for pawning her jewels in 1494, bestowing honour on the house of Gonzaga, had become the very reason to reclaim them two years later. Isabella's plea to Francesco was unsuccessful and on 20 August 1496 Francesco asked her to pawn her remaining jewellery too. Isabella replied:

---

pretiose, e rare abondevoli sono, che ad un tempo diletto grandissimo, e non piccola meraviglia porgono a i riguardanti.' Hirdt 1981, p. 26-27. See also: Rogers 1988, p. 58.

[42] Vienna 1994, p. 263. For a transcription of the jewellery section of the inventory, see: p. 282-283.

[43] 'per honore de la S.V. et de la casa'. Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Urbino, 24 April 1494. The complete letter is published in: Luzio and Renier 1896b, p. 314.

[44] Luzio and Renier 1896b, p. 315.

[45] 'Ben la prego voglia fare ogni cosa perché non se ne faci altro contracto aciò se possino havere adesso, sì per non metterle a periculo de perderle, como per portare in questa mia jovenile età ne la quale se conveneno, che quando se impegnassino anchora per qualche anni io poi ne poteria cavare poco constructo, né me ne poteria honorare.' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua, 11 July 1496. Shemek 2005, p. 129-131.

I am of course always ready to obey Your Excellency's command in everything, but perhaps you have forgotten that my jewels are at present in pawn at Venice, not only those which you gave me, but those which I brought when I came to Mantua as a bride or have bought myself since my marriage. I say this, not because I want to make any difference between what is yours and what is mine, but to ensure you are aware that I have only four jewels left in the house along with the large balas ruby which you gave me when my first child was born, my large diamond, my *favorito*, and the last one which you recently gave me. If I pledge these, I shall be left entirely without jewels and shall be obliged to wear black, because to appear in coloured silks and brocades without jewels would be ridiculous. Your Excellency will understand that I only say this out of regard for your honour and mine: and that is why I ask and beg you to agree I do not rob myself of these few. If you nonetheless want to have jewellery pledged, I will give you my *camora* embroidered with jewels, for I had rather be without that than without jewels.[46]

In this letter Isabella makes it very clear what her jewellery means, not only to her personally, but also in the broader context of the court environment. She could do without sumptuous dress and shows her willingness to cooperate by offering her precious embroidered *camora*, but it would simply be impossible to maintain her status and above all her honour as a marchioness without the few jewels she had left. Moreover, it would affect not only her own status, but that of her husband too.

Isabella alluded to the same sentiments on an earlier occasion. In July 1492 Ludovico Sforza had invited her to Milan. Isabella's father, Ercole d'Este, was going as well and Francesco thought it would be a good idea for his wife to join his company. Isabella, though, wanted more time to prepare herself and wrote to her husband that she truly wanted to go to Milan if this was his wish, but that it was absolutely impossible to leave straight away because he still had to choose which courtiers should be in her entourage. 'However,' she finished her letter, 'if it appears otherwise to Your Excellency I will go whenever you like, because if I were to go all alone, wearing a *camicia*, it would be fine with me because I would be obeying Your Excellency'.[47] Of course it would have been out of the question for a marchioness to go on a state visit without retinue and wearing nothing but a simple shirt. By exaggerating the situation, Isabella smartly pointed out the importance of decorum to her husband.

Apparently Isabella's plea was successful, for in the next weeks a series of letters followed with orders to various courtiers to start preparations for the journey, thus ensuring that Isabella and her company had more to wear than just a *camicia*. On 2 August Isabella wrote to the Ferrarese courtier Brandelisio Trotto:

---

[46] 'Io sono sempre disposta ad obedire la Signoria Vostra in omne cosa, ma perchè forsi la non se ricorda che sono in pigno tutte le altre a Venetia, m'è parso significarli che gli sono non solum quelle che me ha datto Vostra Signoria, ma anche quelle ch'io portai a marito et ho comprato io doppo. Il che non dico perchè facia differentia da le sue e le mie, ma perchè la intendi el tutto, per modo ch'io non ho in casa se non quarto zoglieli et el balasso che Vostra Excellentia comparatte quando io era de parto de la prima putta, lo diamante grande, el favorito, et quello che ultimamente la me dette, che quando se impognassero questi io restaria in tutto priva de zoglie da poter portare et me serìa forza ridurmi a vestire de Negro, perchè vestendo de colore et de brocato una mia para senza zoglie serìa calleffata. La Excellentia Vostra può molto ben pensare ch'io non facio questo discorso se non per honore suo et mio: et però la pregoet supplico voglia essere contenta che non me spoglia de queste poche; perchè quando pur la voglia che se impignano zoglie più presto io gli darò la mia camora recamata de zoglie, perchè manco male serrà stare senza essa che senza gioielli.' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua, 27 August 1496. Luzio and Renier 1896b, p. 315-316. Translation partially cited from: Welch 2005, p. 257.

[47] 'Tutavia parendo altramente a la S.V. andarò quando a lei piacerà, perchè se andassi ben sola e in camisa me pareria andare bene obedendo la S.V.' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Ferrara, 25 July 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 348.

Because we have to go to Milan in the middle of this month, we would like our necklace to be carried out a hundred times. We beg you and urge you […] to finish it without failure in time […] because we want the few persons that we bring to appear as honourable as possible with the necklaces.[48]

The same day Isabella excuses herself with the Venetian nobleman Taddeo Contarini, whom she still owes money for a certain piece of jewellery. She explains that she cannot pay him back yet, 'because the journey to Milan that we will undertake has been an important occasion to make new purchases'.[49] When the party left around mid-August, Isabella realised she forgot to take one of her headdresses with her. To a courtier who stayed behind in Mantua she wrote: 'With the enclosed key we want you to unlock the black chest that is in our room and take from it the headdress with our feather of jewels and send it to us with a horseman by return of post'.[50]

Isabella's correspondence surrounding the departure for Milan and the letters exchanged with her husband on the pledged jewellery provide exceptional insight into Isabella's personal involvement with her jewellery. She is keenly aware of the occasion she has to dress for and the honour of her family. Isabella's ideas on how to dress properly are reflected in Renaissance conduct literature. By studying fifteenth and sixteenth-century writings on dress, Bridgeman showed appropriateness was considered far more important than beauty.[51] She cites Piccolomini, who in his *Istituzion morale* (1542) wrote:

it would be ugly and distasteful for a nobleman's wife to appear publicly wearing garments suitable for a duchess or a queen – in brocades or cloth of gold, ornamented and embroidered with pearls, gems, or other decoration inappropriate to her rank. For, as beauty in all things results from a due proportion between the elements themselves and between them and the whole, lack of proportion and an ill-conceived relationship between elements results in ugliness. Dress unsuited to the wearer creates a discord that is not just unattractive, but irksome and distasteful to all who see it. A lady therefore has to dress and adorn herself according to the dictates of rank and wealth.[52]

Beauty was clearly not intrinsic to a garment but depended on the social status of the wearer. Like the noblewoman in Piccolomini's example, who would be ugly in gold brocade and jewellery because it did not fit her rank, as a marchioness Isabella would be ugly without this finery.

---

[48] 'Havendo nui ad andare a Milano a mezo questo mese, voressimo però ch'el fusse compita la collana nostra de cento volte: pregamovi e stringemovi […] che la sia senza falo finita a tempo […] perchè desideramo che quelle poche persone che conuremo vengano honorevole maxime de collane.' Isabella d'Este to Brandelisio Trotto, Mantua, 2 August 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 349.

[49] 'però che la andata che habiamo ad fare verso Milano n'è stata grande casone de spese.' Isabella d'Este to Taddeo Contarini, Mantua, 2 August 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 349.

[50] 'Volgliamo che tu deschiave cum questa chiave inclusa el forcero negro, che è ne la nostra camera, et togli el capello cum la nostra penna de le zoglie et ce lo mandi per un cavallaro a posta volando.' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Cusastro, Pizzighettone, 13 August 1492. Luzio and Renier 1890b, p. 349.

[51] Bridgeman 1998, p. 44. On dress in conduct literature also see Currie 2000, p. 157-177, who focuses especially on the court of Florence during the reign of Cosimo I (1537-1569).

[52] 'se la donna fusse a nobil gentiluomo congiunta in consorte, brutissima cosa e odiosa saria di veder ch'ella con vesti apparisse fuori più a Ducchessa o a Regina che a gran gentildonna sì convenienti, come sarebbe vestendo brocati e tele d'oro, di perle e di gemme ricamate e fregiate, e simili altri ornamenti alla sua condizion disdicevoli. Perciochè, sì come la bellezza in tute le cose consiste nella proporzion della parti tra loro col tutto loro, così la bruttezza dalla dispoporzione dipende e mal comportamento di dette parti. Onde ogni volta che, non propozionando le vesti con chi le porta, faranno una certa disagguaglianza di parti, sarà forza che talc osa non sol non apparisca dilettevole, ma noiosa incomportabile universalmente a chiunque la vede.' Alessandro Piccolomini, *Istituzion morale*, 1542. Cited from: Bridgeman 1998, p. 45.

This view on dress embellished with jewellery, expressed by Isabella in her letters only three years before Leonardo drew her portrait and repeated in etiquette books throughout the sixteenth century, makes one wonder even more why she was depicted by him without any jewellery. Although the cut of Isabella's dress and her hairstyle in Leonardo's cartoon are consistent with the fashions of the day, the absence of jewellery is clearly very unusual for a lady of her standing and in daily life might have been considered inappropriate for a marchioness. The general assumption that it was Isabella who chose to be portrayed in the latest fashion seems, therefore, to be both incorrect – for the latest court fashion would have included jewellery – and questionable because it is unlikely that Isabella, who was so aware of her appearance, would have deliberately omitted her jewellery.[53]

3.1. Isabella's 'living likeness'

Isabella was as critical a patron when it came to portraiture as she was a consumer of textiles and accessories. The above-cited passage from Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* shows that beauty was seen as an indispensable virtue of the court lady. At the same time patrons desired to be portrayed from life, 'ritratto al naturale'. In an important article on idealism and naturalism in Renaissance portraits, Joanna Woods-Marsden pointed out that in reality a 'lifelike' portrait had to be idealized to some degree, if not completely, to suit the sitter's wishes.[54] Alberti had already expressed this view in his treatise on painting:

> Apelles painted the portrait of Antigonus only from the side of his face away from his bad eye. They say Pericles had a rather long, misshapen head, and so he used to have his portrait done by painters and sculptors, not like other people with head bare, but wearing his helmet. Plutarch tells how the ancient painters, when painting kings who had some physical defect, did not wish this to appear to have been overlooked, but they corrected it as far as possible while still maintaining the likeness.[55]

As several authors have pointed out, for Isabella idealized beauty and a lifelike portrait were difficult to reconcile. Although most contemporary writers describe Isabella as a physical beauty, there are also sources that indicate otherwise. In a satirical prevision for the year 1534, in which Pietro Aretino made fun of astrological predictions, he announced that Isabella, a sixty-year-old widow at that time, would bear another child in winter. He described her as 'the monstrous marchioness of Mantua, who had teeth of ebony and eyelashes of ivory, dishonestly ugly and embellished to an astonishingly dishonest degree'.[56] This description may well be an exaggeration, but Isabella's corpulence is a subject that comes up repeatedly in her own letters. For instance in 1509 Isabella's husband, Francesco Gonzaga, sent her some partridges and alluded to her body weight in the accompanying letter. Isabella replied: 'I hope that this heat will

---

[53] Expressed by: Viatte 1999, p. 32 and Brown 1990, p. 57.
[54] Woods-Marsden 1987, p. 209-216.
[55] 'Apelles Antigoni imaginem ea tantum parte vultus pingebat qua oculi vitium non aderat. Periclem referunt habuisse caput oblongum et deforme; idcirco a pictoribus et sculptoribus, non ut caeteros inoperto capite, sed casside vestito eum formari solitum. Tum antiquos pictores refert Plutarchus solitos in pingendis regibus, si quid vitii aderat formae, non id praetermissum videri velle, sed quam maxime possent, servata similitudine, emendabant.' Alberti 1972, p. 78-81, Book II, 40.
[56] 'la mostruosa Marchesana de Mantova la quale a i denti de hebano e le ciglia de avorio, dishonestamente brutta et arcidishonestamente imbellettata'. Aretino's complete text was published by Luzio, see: Luzio 1900b, p. 9. Translation cited from: Brown 2011, p. 47. On the wedding medal with a double portrait of Isabella and her husband Francesco Gonzaga, one of the few lifelike images showing her with a double chin, see: Syson 1997, p. 241.

help me to lose weight with common sense, but if I had had the fears and the worries that Your Excellency has had because of these French cowards I would not have grown so fat'.[57]

The wedding medal with a double portrait of Isabella and Francesco, made in 1490, shows her with a double chin (fig. 100).[58] Isabella's reaction to this medal is not known, but there are several other portraits that she disapproved of, officially because she thought they were not good likenesses, but in reality they were probably too lifelike for her taste. In 1493, for instance, she had agreed to exchange portraits with Isabella del Balzo (1465-1533), the future queen of Naples. In a letter written in January to Jacopo d'Atri, Francesco Gonzaga's secretary and envoy in Naples, she confirmed that she would pose for a portrait: 'To satisfy the illustrious Lady the Countess of Cerra [Isabella del Balzo], whom we love dearly, we have ordered our portrait on panel by the hand of Andrea Mantegna'.[59] By April Isabella d'Este had already received a portrait on paper and one in wax of the countess. D'Atri had told Isabella that one of the portraits did not resemble the Countess perfectly, and Isabella wrote her that she would 'often look at it correcting the defects of the artist with the help of the information from Margherita, Jacopo and others who have seen you, so that we may not be deceived in our concept of you'.[60] In her next letter, she explained that she was unable to present the countess with a portrait of herself in return:

> We are very sorry that we cannot send you our portrait at the moment, because the painter has done it so badly, that it does not resemble us in the least; we have sent for a painter from outside Mantua who is reputed to be good at counterfeiting from life.[61]

David Alan Brown noted that Mantegna, who was famous for his naturalistic portraits, had probably depicted Isabella far too realistically.[62] Isabella was not alone in her judgement of Mantegna. Lodovico Gonzaga (1412-1478), grandfather of Isabella's husband Francesco, had personally appointed Mantegna as his court painter, even though he did not think highly of him as a portrait painter. In a letter, he wrote: 'It is true that Andrea is a good master in other things, but in portraiture he could have more grace and he does not do so well.'[63] In the same letter, Lodovico described how Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, was not satisfied either and even burned sheets with his portrait by Mantegna.

---

[57] 'spero che questo caldo me aiuterà a smagrare da bon senno, ma se io havesse havuto de le fantasie et affanni che ha havuto V.S. da questi poltroni de francesi forsi che non serìa così grassa'. Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, 22 June 1509. Luzio 1900a, p. 438.

[58] According to Syson, the wedding medal is one of the few, if not the only, truly lifelike images of Isabella. Syson 1997, p. 241.

[59] 'Per satisfare a la ill.ma M.na Contessa de la Cerra, quale amamo cordialmente havemo ordinato de esser retrata in tavola per mane de Andrea Mantinea.' Isabella d'Este to Jacopo d'Atri, January 1493. Luzio 1900a, p. 347.

[60] '…spesso lo consideriamo supplendo cum la infomacione de Margarita, Jaocomo et alti che hanno veduto la S.V. al defecto del pictore per modo de niente restamo ingannate del concepto nostro.' Isabella d'Este to Isabella del Balzo, Mantua, 3 April 1493. Luzio 1900a, p. 347. Translation cited from: Land 1994, p. 115. It is unknown which Margherita Isabella was referring to.

[61] 'Dolne summamente che non gli potiamo mandare al presente el nostro retracto, perchè el Pictore me ha tanto mal facta che non ha alcuna de le nostre simiglie: havemo mandato per uno forestere, qual ha fama de contrafare bene el naturale.' Isabella d'Este to Isabella del Balzo, 20 April 1493. Luzio 1900a, p. 347. Translation partially cited from: Brown 2011, p. 45. On Isabella del Balzo, see: Salvatore Fodale in: DBI vol. 62 (2004), s.v. 'Isabella del Balzo, regina di Napoli', p. 623-625.

[62] Brown 1990, p. 54.

[63] 'È vero che Andrea è bon maestro in le altre cose, ma nel retrare porìa havere più gratia e non fa cussì bene.' Lodovico Gonzaga to Zaccaria Saggi, Mantua, 30 November 1475. Cited from: Woods-Marsden 1987, p. 210.

The painter from outside the city who received the commission for another portrait to be sent to Isabella del Balzo was Giovanni Santi. When the portrait was finished Isabella once again reported that it was not a good likeness, but she sent it to Isabella del Balzo anyway:

To satisfy Your Ladyship's wish, not because my likeness is of such beauty that it deserves to be painted every time, I send you […] the panel portrait by the hand of Giovanni Santi, painter of the illustrious duchess of Urbino, of whom they say he works well from nature, although, as has been reported to me, it could resemble me more.[64]

Five years later, in 1498, Isabella had her portrait painted again, at the request of Isabella of Aragon. This time Isabella called upon a painter from Parma, Gianfrancesco Maineri. He arrived in Mantua in November 1498 and in March 1499 the portrait was finished. Isabella then sent the portrait to Milan, where Ludovico Sforza was to judge whether it could be presented to Isabella of Aragon. Isabella wrote somewhat ironically to Ludovico:

I am afraid to create annoyance not only to Your Lordship but to all Italy by sending my portraits every time, and although I do not like to do it, they are so often requested and sought after by those who ask me, that I cannot refuse. The illustrious Lady Duchess Isabella [of Aragon] has asked me again if I would send her one of my portraits in colour. Even though again I think it is not very like me, for it is a bit fatter than I am, I gave it to Negro, my equerry, with the order first to talk to Your Excellency and if the portrait satisfies you, you can present it to the exquisite Lady the Duchess on my behalf, and if not, he will do what you order him.[65]

Isabella was obviously not satisfied with the way the painter had represented her and complained about her body size, a problem that regularly bothered her as we have seen. Ludovico, though, was less critical of the painter's achievements and answered:

Negro has presented me with the letter from Your Ladyship with your portrait, which pleases us because it seems to me it resembles you quite well; it is true that it makes you look somewhat fatter than Your Ladyship is, unless you have grown fatter since the last time we saw you.[66]

When the Bolognese painter Francesco Francia portrayed Isabella more than a decade later, in 1511, likeness was an issue again. Isabella's half-sister Lucrezia d'Este (c. 1477-?), wife of Annibale Bentivoglio of Bologna (1469-1550), had persuaded Isabella to hire Francia and

---

[64] 'Per satisfare el desiderio de V. S., non perchè la effigie mia sia de tal beleza che la meriti andare in volta depincta, gli mando […] el retracto in tavola facto per mano de Zohan de Sancte pictor de la Ill.ma Duchessa di Urbino, qual dicono far bene dal naturale, etiam che questo, secundo m'è referto, se me puoteria più assimigliare.' Isabella d'Este to Isabella del Balzo, 13 January 1494. Luzio 1900a, p. 347.

[65] 'Dubito venire in fastidio non solum a la S.V. ma ad tutta Italia cum mandare questi miei retracti in volta, et benchè malvoluntieri il faccia, nondimeno essendone cum tanta instancia recircata da chi me puo comandare, non posso negarli. La Ill. M.a Ducchessa Isabella de novo me ha facto pregare che volglia mandare uno di miei retracti coloriti. Ritrovandomi questo anchor non mi sia molto simile, per essere un poco più grasso che non sono io, lo ho consignato al Negro mio M.ro de stalla, cum ordine che prima ne parli a la Cel.ne V. et quando la se contenti lo presenti a la p.ta M.a Duchessa da mia parte, quando non, facia quanto la gli comandarà.' Isabella d'Este to Ludovico Sforza, Mantua, 13 March 1499. Luzio 1900a, p. 351.

[66] 'Dal Negro ne è stato presentato la lettera de la S.V. col ritracto suo la imagine del qualene e piaciuta parendone assai simile a lei; è vero che è alquanto demonstrativa de più grasseza che non ha la S.V. excepto se non la è facta più grassa dopoi che noi la vidimo.' Ludovico Sforza to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 21 March 1499. Luzio 1900a, p. 351.

kept her informed about the progress of the picture.[67] In her first letter, dated 13 July 1511, she informs Isabella that the painter has been provided with her portrait to serve as an example for a first drawing that he will make as soon possible.[68] At the end of the month, Lucrezia writes a second letter, explaining that Francia is not satisfied with the result so far and refuses to show her the drawing. Only when the likeness really resembles Isabella, will Lucrezia be allowed to see it, 'because', she writes: 'I have engraved on my soul the living likeness of Your Highness and will know if he deceives me because I can describe all of your true outlines, and I will write to you my opinion'.[69] By the end of August the portrait was finished, but unfortunately Lucrezia thought it was not like her at all. She reported her findings to Isabella on 7 September: 'I will tell the truth without holding anything back. I did not think it bore any similarity to you, because it was too severe and too thin'. She advised Isabella, 'for your honour and my satisfaction', to have the painter come over to Mantua and pose for him.[70] Isabella refused, but Lucrezia was able to report a few weeks later that 'if it is true what the tutor of my children has told me […], the portrait that he [Francia] made resembles the other of Your Excellency quite well'.[71] She added that it would be even better after she had been able to comment on it.

By the end of October the portrait was finished and indeed Lucrezia enthusiastically wrote:

> when you compare it to the first [Isabella's likeness that served as an example], it is as lifelike as that one, but with much more perfect virtuosity. In our city all those who know Your Excellency, on seeing this portrait, are in agreement in affirming that it is the living image of you.[72]

Isabella's reactions, on the other hand, are somewhat mixed. To Francia she wrote: 'you have made us far more beautiful by your art than nature ever made us, so we thank you with all our heart'.[73] A letter from Lucrezia to Isabella, however, reveals that Isabella was not completely satisfied and had requested the colour of her eyes be changed. Lucrezia strongly advised against

---

[67] Francesco Francia was no stranger to Isabella, since he had already portrayed her son Federigo in 1510, a painting that is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. no. 14.40.638). On this portrait, see most recently: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 241-244, no. 93, with further references.

[68] Hickson stated that the portrait sent to Francia was the likeness by Lorenzo Costa, documented to have been painted in 1508. Hickson 2009, p. 295. However, none of the letters concerning the Francia commission mention a portrait by Costa. Moreover, Isabella refused to have Francia come over to Mantua, because she did not want to offend Costa, her official court painter at that moment. For this letter, see: Luzio 1913, p. 209-210.

[69] 'per havere in lo animo scolpita la imagine viva de V. Ex., credo se non me ingano gli saprò demostrare tuti gli suoi veraci lineamenti', Lucrezia d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Bologna, 31 July 1511. Luzio 1900a, p. 427.

[70] 'Dirò il vero senza assentione, non mi pareva havere con essa similitudine alcuna, mostrando più saturna, più scarna'; 'per l'honor suo et contento mio' Lucrezia d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Bologna, 7 September 1511. Luzio 1900a, p. 427-428.

[71] 'se vero è quel me ha referto il preceptore de miei figlij [...] simigliandosi assai bene lo retracto che ha facto con quel altro de V.Ex.' Lucrezia d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Bologna, 26 September 1511. Luzio 1900a, p. 328. According to Luzio, the mentioned tutor may have been Guido Postuma, who knew Isabella well.

[72] 'quando il vederà al parangone de quel primo non mancho natural che quello ma de artificio assai più perfecto. In questa nostra citate tuti queli che conoscono V. Ex. vedendo questo ritratto tutti consentienti insieme affirmanoche gli par vedere la viva imagine di quell.' Lucrezia d'Este to Isabella d'Este, Bologna, 25 October 1511. Luzio 1900a, p. 429. Translation partially cited from: Hickson 2009, p. 297.

[73] 'avendoni vui cum l'arte vostra facta assai più bella che non ni ha facto natura, ringratiamovine quanto più potemo.' Isabella d'Este to Francesco Francia, Mantua, 25 November 1511. Luzio 1900a, p. 429. Translation: Hickson 2009, p. 297, with minor adaptions by the author.

it, because a change in eye colour would make the painting lose its grace, the painter would have to adjust the shadows to the new colour of the eyes and he would have to varnish the panel again.[74] Isabella apparently agreed and the portrait remained in Mantua, where she gave it away to an acquaintance.[75] Isabella's reaction beautifully illustrates the antithetical characteristics sought after in a portrait: likeness and idealization. These opposing qualities made Isabella a critical patron, although she does not appear to have been more critical than her contemporaries were concerning their own portraits.

3.2. The function of court portraiture

The many likenesses of Isabella made during her lifetime cover a wide range of occasions for portrait commissions in a courtly context. One of Isabella's first portraits must have been painted when she was only six years old. In the spring of 1480 the engagement between Isabella and Francesco was settled and shortly after the Mantuan ambassador in Ferrara, Beltramino Cusatro, sent Isabella's portrait to Mantua: 'By this horseman I send the portrait of Lady Isabella, so that Your Excellency and Lord Francesco can see her likeness, but the most admirable are her intellect and intelligence.'[76] The portrait was probably painted by the Ferrarese court painter Cosmè Tura, for he received a payment of 4 *fiorini* on 30 May 1480 for the painting of 'the head of Lady Isabella'.[77] Unfortunately, the portrait did not survive. Marriage or engagement portraits were very common at the Italian courts. Very often future spouses did not meet before marriage and painted portraits were the only means by which they were able to obtain a visual impression of each other. An example is the betrothal portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza, which was probably meant for her future husband Maximilian I (fig. 62).[78]

In a well-known passage in *De pictura*, Alberti describes the principal power of portraits, and even painting in general, as follows:

> Painting possesses a truly divine power in that it does not only make the absent present, as they say of friendship, but it also represents the dead to the living many centuries later […] Through painting, the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time.[79]

---

[74] The letter is dated 9 December 1511 and is published in Luzio 1900a, p. 429. Norman Land noted Lucrezia's arguments show a striking knowledge of visual arts, with which she was probably provided by the painter himself, and that, even though the painting may not have been a perfect likeness, its aesthetic qualities were very much appreciated. Land 1994, p. 115-116.

[75] Emilio Negro and Nicosetta Roio consider a portrait in a private collection to be the portrait by Francia, see: Negro and Roio 1998, p. 196-198. As Hickson pointed out, there is not much evidence to support this claim nor is there any physical resemblance with other portraits of Isabella. Moreover, the cut of the sitter's dress with tight-fitting sleeves that have two puffs at the upper arm suggests a date around 1530 or even later rather than 1511. Lorenzo Lotto's *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia* in the National Gallery in London (inv. no. NG4256), dated to c. 1530-1532, shows a sitter wearing a similar style. For a discussion of her dress, see: Penny 2004, p. 78.

[76] 'Per questo cavalaro mando madonna Isabella ritrata, aciò che V.S. e D. Francesco possa vedere la effigie sua: ma più è il mirabile intellecto et inzegno suo.' Beltramino Cusatro to Federico I Gonzaga, Ferrara, 17 April 1480. Luzio 1908, p. 45.

[77] 'la testa de madonna Isabella', Luzio 1900a, p. 346.

[78] Many other examples are known through archival sources. Cosmè Tura, for instance, is documented to have also painted three portraits of Isabella's brother Alfonso for his finance, Anna Sforza. Brown 2011, p. 38.

[79] 'Nam habet ea quidem in se vim admodum divinam non modo ut quod de amicitia dicunt, absentes pictura praesentes esse faciat, verum etiam defunctos longa post saecula viventibus exhibeat […]Itaque vultus defunctorum per picturam quodammodo vitam praelongam degunt.' Alberti 1972, p. 60-61, Book II, 25.

Indeed, the portraits of their late parents were very dear to Isabella and her brother Alfonso. Alfonso asked to borrow these portraits from Isabella for a short period of time. On 23 March 1528 Isabella sent the portraits to Girolamo Zigliolo, a courtier in Ferrara. In his reply of 9 April, Zigliolo explained it had taken somewhat longer to return them, because 'the Duke, Your Excellency's brother, told me that he wanted to look at them for another breath and also because I myself could not get enough of seeing them whenever time permitted'.[80] Five days later, Isabella confirmed she had received the portraits, which pleased her very much, and she assured Zigliolo that they would be 'placed among the most precious things we have in this world'.[81]

The vast majority of Isabella's own portraits, however, were meant to be sent to family members or to friends at other courts while she was still alive. It was very common for court members to exchange portraits 'to make the absent present', as Alberti put it. When Francesco Gonzaga was kept hostage by the Venetians in 1509, a copy of a portrait of Isabella by Lorenzo Costa was sent to him in his Venetian prison at his request. Both the original and its copy are presumably lost. The original portrait, painted in 1508, was one of the few that pleased Isabella and it was regularly shown to visitors in Mantua. In November 1508 it was even sent to Ferrara, because Isabella's relatives were eager to admire it as well.[82]

One of the rare portraits made in the 1490s that did please Isabella was the portrait medal made by Gian Cristoforo Romano (fig. 96).[83] Over a period of at least nine years she gave away many copies of the medal to friends and allies. A letter of Jacopo d'Atri from Naples to Isabella illustrates some of the reactions to the likeness:

> Gian Cristoforo Romano, your faithful servant, is here and he gave me a medal of Your Ladyship that is a thousand times beautiful, like you are yourself. He told me he has shown it as a divine object to all the Queens, who all marvelled at it […][84]

One of the ladies stated that, besides exceptional beauty, 'the likeness indicated great intelligence', as she had already heard having been told about Isabella when she was in France.[85] The ladies looked at the medal for a long time, praising the likeness as well as Isabella herself. One of them even wanted to kiss the medal.

The portrait medal was not the only portrait that was widely distributed. Many friends and relatives asked Isabella for her painted or sculpted portrait as well. As discussed above,

---

[80] 'Duca fratello di V. Ex. mi havea detto volerli vedere un'altra fiata et anche perchè non mi poteva satiare de vederli quando el tempo me ne dava commoditá.' Girolamo Zigliolo to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 9 April 1528. Luzio 1913, p. 187, note 1.

[81] 'saranno collocati con le più preciose cose che habbiamo al mondo', Isabella to Girolamo Zigliolo, Mantua, 14 April 1528. Luzio 1913, p. 187, note 1.

[82] Luzio 1900a, p. 355, 359. Costa's *Portrait of a Lady with a Lapdog*, now in the Royal Collection (inv. no. 405762), has been identified as the portrait of Isabella d'Este by Luzio 1913, p. 208-209 and Cust 1914, p. 289. This identification is no longer upheld, because the painting belongs stylistically to Costa's earlier, Bolognese period and is dated to c. 1500-1505. Moreover, the sitter's dress has been dated to the late 1490s by Stella Mary Newton and to c. 1500 by Jane Bridgeman, which is too early to correspond with the portrait of Isabella painted in 1508. See: Whitaker and Clayton 2007, p. 120.

[83] Syson 1997, p. 286, 292.

[84] 'Ioan Christopharo Romano vostro servitore di cuore, è qui et me ha facto degno de una medaglia de vostra signoria che è mille volte bella como voi medesima. Me dice haverla mostrata, come cosa divina ad tutte queste Regine, quele tutte cum maravegla la reguardava [...]' Jacopo d'Atri to Isabella d'Este, Naples, October 1507. Syson 1997, p. 287.

[85] 'che leffigia indicava un grande inzegno', idem. Syson justly points out that the lady is referring to Isabella's *inzegno*, not that of the sculptor. Syson 1997, p. 287-288.

Isabella exchanged portraits with Isabella del Balzo and her niece Isabella of Aragon. Isabella's sister-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia, asked for her likeness as well and she immediately suggested an accomplished sculptor who could make the portrait:

> When the sculptor Gian Giacomo arrived from Rome he showed his work. He brought some fine portraits and he made some others here that are perfect, […] and because I would really like to have a portrait of your Excellency I beg you, if it is no trouble, to agree to be portrayed by the mentioned [sculptor], which would make me exceptionally grateful.[86]

Isabella had received a similar request from her brother Ippolito d'Este in December 1494, when a correspondent from Ferrara wrote her that her brother would undergo the boredom of posing for her, which 'he did not want to do for any of your brothers'. The letter continues: 'He then wants to send the master to you in order to portray Your Excellency […] He asks you to agree because he wants to keep you [your portrait] in a place suitable for a sacred object at the head of his bed.'[87] This letter is very interesting, for it is not just another example of an exchange of portraits. It also reveals something about the use of Isabella's portrait: it was intended to be hung above her brother's bed, a place that is described as appropriate for 'sacred objects'. Isabella's friend Margherita Cantelmo described one of Isabella's portraits in rather the same way. She took the portrait with her on a trip and discussed it with her host. She wrote about the conversation to Isabella: 'I spoke of my Signora, whose sacred and beloved portrait we have sometimes contemplated. How blessed is that portraitist Maestro Francesco, who has served me so well!'[88]

A far less reverent use of one of Isabella's portraits is described in a letter by Beatrice de' Contrari, one of Isabella's former ladies-in-waiting in Ferrara. She wrote to Isabella about the portrait: 'When I go to table I have it put on a lectern in front of me, so that, whenever I see it, it seems to me that I am sitting at the table together with Your Ladyship.'[89] This interaction with portraits was by no means exceptional. Sally Hickson has made an analysis of what she defines as 'the staged viewings' of Isabella's portrait, painted by Francesco Francia in 1511. Shortly after the portrait was finished, Isabella decided to give it away to Gian Francesco

---

[86] 'Essendo venuto da Roma Zo. Jacomo sculptore exhibitore di questa et portato seco alcuni boni retrati et fatone anche qui certi altri in perfectione […] et desiderando grademente io havere la effigie de V. Ex. prego quella quando nolli sia incomodo voglia essere contenta lassarsi ritrare dal dicto che me ne farà singularissima gratia.' Lucrezia Borgia to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara, 14 May 1502. Luzio 1900a, p. 354. It is unknown who the sculptor Gian Giacomo was, but he does not seem have been very reliable in the end. A year after Lucrezia's request, she turned to Isabella again, asking for the sculptor to be imprisoned because he fled Ferrara after stealing a ruby and a diamond.

[87] 'non avea voluti far per nisuno de soi fratelli […] Vole poi mandar la el maeastro che retragi V.S. pregando quela se digni essere contenta perchè il vi vorà tenir in loco di cosa sancta al capo del suo lecto' Taddeo di Lardi in the name of Ippolito d'Este to Isabella d'Este, 21 December 1494. Luzio 1900a, p. 347.

[88] 'quand'io parlava della Mia Signora, della quale contemplavamo qualche volta el piatoso et caro retraction. Che sia benedecto quel maestro Francesco retractore che me ha cosi ben servita!' Margherita Cantelmo to Isabella d'Este, Mortara, 1 June 1505. Hickson 2012, p. 55. Hickson identifies the painter as Francesco Bonsignori. She regards Cantelmo's reaction to Isabella's portraits as an 'appropriately feminine response to female portraiture'. The afore-mentioned letter containing Ippolito's request for one of Isabella's portraits refers to the painting in a similar way, calling it 'sacred'. This contradicts Hickson's gender-related vision. On responses to portraits, including some of the cited examples involving Isabella d'Este, compare also: Woods-Marsden 2013, p. 152-158.

[89] 'come vado a tavola lo fazio ponere suso una cadrega per scontro a me, che vedendolo me pare pur essere a tavola cum V.S.' Beatrice de' Contrari to Isabella d'Este, Ferrara 10 April 1495. Luzio 1900a, p. 346-347.

Zaninello, a minor poet and collector in Ferrara, as a reciprocal gift after he had presented her with an illuminated manuscript of sonnets by Il Pistoia.[90] The idea for the present came from Battista Stabellino, one of Isabella's correspondences from the Ferrarese elite, who had asked Isabella's close friend Margherita Cantelmo in Mantua to persuade her.[91] In March 1512 Stabellino presented the portrait to Zaninello, who was very pleased with it. Stabellino described:

Such celebrations and happiness I have never seen anywhere, and he has begun to invite people to dine in order to show them this portrait. Two days from now he intends to invite eight or ten people for precisely this purpose and he told me to say nothing because he wishes it to be a surprise […][92]

In his next letter to Cantelmo, Stabellino reported that Zaninello had already hosted three dinner parties 'in order to show the beautiful portrait your Illustrious Lady as a surprise' and that he planned to organize even more dinners like these.[93]

According to Hickson, these viewings of Isabella's portrait should be placed in a courtly context, comparable to the one described in Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*. This is a world where word plays and courtly games are very important. Gian Giorgio Trissino's *Ritratti* belong to the same milieu. Written in 1514 and published ten years later in 1524, Trissino composed his *Ritratti* as a dialogue between Pietro Bembo and a certain Macro Vicenzio. Vicenzio starts by describing a beautiful woman he saw in Ferrara. After a generic description of her rose lips, ebony brows and pearl white skin, he goes on to describe her dress:

She, Macro said, had her hair spread over her head in such a way that it ran off her lovely and delicate shoulders; and its was gathered in a hairnet of auburn silk, which had been worked with such skilful craftsmanship that to me the knots seemed to be of the finest gold; and through the knots of this hairnet, which was rather large, you could see her locks of hair shining almost like sunbeams that sparkled everywhere. In the middle of her forehead, where the hair is parted, she had a very beautiful and glowing ruby, from which a shiny and large pearl was dangling; and around her neck she had a string of very large and splendid pearls, which hung down from one side and the other of her chest almost to her belt; she wore a beautiful and rich dress of black velvet, loaded with very well placed gold buckles, and everything she had on her was so admirably decorated that it seemed as if the artisans had wanted to compete with nature itself.[94]

---

[90] On Zaninello, see Hickson 2009, p. 298.
[91] Letter of Battista Stabellino to Margherita Cantelmo, Ferrara, 26 December 1511. Published in Hickson 2009, p. 307.
[92] 'Et ne fa tanta festa et tanta alegreza che non sa dove se sia, ha cominciato a convidar persone suoi (?) a manzare per mostrarli questo retratto, et domatina fa convido a octo o diece pur per questo effecto et dice a mi ch'io non dica niente ch'el vuol mostrargelo all'improviso [...]' Battista Stabellino to Margherita Cantelmo, Ferrara, 21 March 1512. The entire letter is published in: Hickson 2009, p. 307-308.
[93] 'per mostrare all'improvisa il bel retratto de' la vostra Ill.ma Madama', Battista Stabellino to Margherita Cantelmo, Ferrara, 2 April 1512. The entire letter is published in: Hickson 2009, p. 308-309.
[94] 'Ella, disse Macro, haveva i capegli in capo diffusi, in guisa, che sopra i candidi, e dillicati humeri ricadeano; e questi tutti erano raccolti da una rete di seta di color tanè, con maestrevole artificio lavorata, i groppi de la quale mi pareano essere di finississimo oro; e fra meço le maglie di questa rete, le quali erano alquanto larghette, vi si vedeano scintillare i capegli, i quali, quasi raggi del Sole, che uscisseno, risplendevano dognintomo. Ne la sommità poi de la fronte, dove questi in due parti si divideno, vi haveva un bellissimo, e fiammeggiante rubino, dal quale una lucidissima e grossa perla pendeva; et al collo haveva un filo di grossissime, equali, e splendidissime perle , il quale da l'una, e da l'altra parte del petto scendendo quasi fin a la cintola n'agiungea; ma indosso haveva una bella, e ricca robba di velluto nero, carica di alcune fibie d'oro, tanto ben poste, e tanto ogni cosa, che haveva dintorno, era mirabilmente

Bembo recognizes Isabella d'Este from this description. Hickson compares this game of identifying the person portrayed in words to Zaninello's staging of Isabella's painted portrait at his dinner parties. In both cases the audience was encouraged to discuss the subject portrayed after identification much in the same way as the Neapolitan court ladies praised Isabella's portrait medal, or the way in which Isabella wrote to the Countess of Acerra, whose portrait she would supplement with d'Atri's descriptions.[95] Hence, Isabella's portraits were part of a lively discourse, which covered not only her idealized physical likeness, but her character and virtues as well.

4. Dress in portraits

It is interesting to note that the descriptive part of Trissino's literary portrait of Isabella puts great emphasize on her dress, which apparently sufficed to identify her. This description seems to have been influential. Katharina Andres noted a striking similarity between the ornaments described here and the jewellery Isabella wears in two copies after a now lost portrait by Titian, the *Isabella in Red*.[96] The original portrait was probably painted between 1527 and 1530, when Titian was working for Isabella's son Federigo.[97] One of the copies, usually dated to the sixteenth century, is only known from black-and-white photographs and its present whereabouts are unknown (fig. 101). The second copy was made by Rubens, most likely in 1600 or 1601, and is now part of the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (fig. 102).[98] Isabella wears a deep-red gown with sleeves that are puffed at the upper arm and tight-fitting around the underarm. Her accessories in particular are comparable to those described by Trissino. Isabella's hairnet is decorated with a brooch in which a large ruby catches the eye, with a pear-shaped pearl attached to it. She wears a string of pearls that according to the description almost reaches down to her golden girdle.

Andres suggested that Titian used the *Ritratti* as an example for his portrait. This seems plausible, for Isabella disliked posing and her refusals to sit for portraits from the early sixteenth century onwards are numerous.[99] She did not pose either for the second portrait by Titian, which still survives and is now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna as well (fig. 103). It can be concluded from her correspondence that Isabella borrowed the Francia portrait from Zaninello's heirs and sent it to Titian in 1534. He finished the portrait in 1536 and Isabella was delighted with the result, acknowledging in a letter to the Mantuan ambassador in Venice: 'The portrait by Titian's hand is so pleasing a type that we doubt that at the age he represents us we ever had the beauty it contains.'[100]

---

lavorata, che pareva gli artefici, per omar costei, haver voluto con la natura istessa contendere.' Hirdt 1981, p. 23.

[95] Hickson 2009, p. 300-305.

[96] Andres 1999, p. 256.

[97] Isabella certainly did not know Titian before 1519 and his first documented commission from the marchioness dates from 1530. See: Luzio 1900a, p. 431.

[98] For the dating of the Rubens copy and references to further literature on both portraits, see: Wood 2010, p. 246-249.

[99] Isabella's refusal to pose for Francia has already been mentioned. Another example is her refusal to send her portrait to the French court in 1516. The Mantuan ambassador in Paris, Jacopo d'Atri, had asked Isabella to do so, but Isabella replied that she did not have the patience to sit for a painter: 'Quanto sia per mandarvi il ritracto nostro, questo non potemo ne volemo fare, si perchè non ni havemo alcuni ne volemo più quella di star paciente a farni ritrare', Isabella d'Este to Jacopo d'Atri, Mantua, 28 February 1516. Luzio 1913, p. 216-217.

[100] 'Il ritratto nostro di man di Titiano ne piace di sorte che dubitiamo di non esser stata in quell'etade che'egli rappresenta di quella beltà che in sè contiene.' Isabella d'Este to Benedetto Agnello, Mantua, 29

Titian represented Isabella as a young girl, wearing a headdress that was considered to be one of Isabella's own inventions. The *capigliara* or *zazara* consisted of a hairnet decorated with false hair and silk.[101] A letter to Isabella from Eleonora Ruscha, Countess of Correggio, refers to the headdress and is yet another example of a lady's request to wear a fashion ascribed to Isabella:

Finding myself in Locarno, I heard that some noblewomen in Milan were wearing a new type of silk *zazare*, a notable invention of Your Ladyship's. And since I now find myself almost without a hat, with great desire I beg you to consider me worthy of one.[102]

Titian's portrait shows Isabella with a bulbous *capigliara*, decorated with a large brooch with eight pearls surrounding a gem in the centre. Blue sleeves embroidered with the *fantasie dei vinci* motif appear from under a black overgown, which inspired the portrait's current title, *Isabella in Black*.[103] Other fashionable accessories are the pearl earrings and a fur piece across the shoulder. Like Trissino in his literary portrait, Titian put a great deal of emphasis on Isabella's dress and especially her jewellery, which reflect her status as well as her beauty and virtues.

Although there is a complete lack of sources on the dress in Isabella's lost early portraits, two of Isabella's letters regarding other portrait commissions clearly indicate that she was very well aware of the dress worn by a sitter. In 1494 she wrote to Ferrara with instructions regarding two portraits she wanted to have painted, one of her brother and one of her father:

make clear to master Ercole [de' Roberti] the painter that we do not care whether he sends the portrait of Lord Alfonso our brother until his hair is grown; but we do want him to send us immediately the portrait of the illustrious Lord our father in colourful dress and the cap he normally wears on his head.[104]

Eight years later, Isabella wished to have another portrait of her father painted. Because he had died in 1505, it had to be based on an earlier painting. However, Isabella wanted the clothing to be updated to around the time of her father's death and wrote to her correspondent, Girolamo Zigliolo, in Ferrara, asking him to send the garments that her painter in Mantua would need:

We have a portrait of the illustrious Lord, our late father, very like and good, but with an old-fashioned hat and doublet like they used to wear. We wish to have another from this, but with a hat and doublet like

---

May 1536. Luzio 1900a, p. 432. Translation cited from: Brown 2011, p. 47. For the earlier letters regarding the portrait by Francia, see: Luzio 1900a, p. 432 as well.

[101] On this headdress, see: Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 3, p. 90.

[102] 'Ritrovandomi a Locharno, ho presentito essere stà portato a Milano da certe zentildonne una nova fogia de zazare de seta provenute da notabile inventione de la prefata V.S.; et per retrovarmi al presente quasi senza capelli, cum sumo desiderio prego quella me voglia fare essere degna de una.' Eleonora Ruscha to Isabella d'Este, Locarno 1509. Luzio and Renier 1896a, p. 667.

[103] Goffen 1997, p. 87 states the *fantasie dei vinci* on their own provide sufficient evidence to identify the sitter as Isabella d'Este. Although it was originally designed for Isabella by Niccolò da Correggio, the motif was worn from the outset by other ladies, including Isabella's sister Beatrice. Moreover, the interlace pattern became very popular in the course of the sixteenth century and also appears in Titian's portraits of Emilia and Irene di Spilimbergo (Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. nos. 1942.9.82 and 1942.9.83).

[104] 'fate intendere a m.ro Hercule pictore che non se curamo chel ce mandi retracto el S. Don Alphonso nostro fratello finchè non gli sia cresciuto li capilli; ma voressimo bene chel ce mandasse subito el retracto de l'Ill.o S.r nostro patre de vestito de colore col suo capello in testo como solea andare.' Isabella to Ippolita Tassoni, 16 May 1494. Luzio 1913, p. 187, note 1.

those that he wore around the time of his death; therefore we ask you to send us his doublets and hat, which we will return to you immediately after the painter has seen them.[105]

These letters are two of the few sources on the choice for dress in a portrait around 1500. Both show Isabella's decisive role; she decided which garments should be represented and gave the painter access to them. This reflects common practice. Earlier in the fifteenth century, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the Duke of Milan, prescribed exactly what he and his wife should be wearing in their portraits, which were to be painted in a chapel in Milan cathedral. Having seen the design he wrote to the painter: 'Master Benedetto, we have seen the drawing that you sent us and, so that you know what you should do considering our dress, we tell you to dress us in gold brocade, both my most illustrious wife and us, and me in a short garment'.[106]

Another source, a poem by Vespasiano Strozzi, dedicated to the Ferrarese court painter Cosmè Tura, highlights the role of the sitter. The poet describes the delay caused by a hesitating sitter who could not decide what clothes to wear when having her portrait painted (app. 5F):

But while she debates on what season suits such serious / Business, and what clothes to wear, a year disappears. / Spring is praised, indeed, but summer's called more suitable, / Now autumn pleases and now winter is endorsed. / Now, wrapped up, she wants her hair painted with some covering, / Now again she yearns for her tresses to be bare. / And while the silly girl shifts the day and different forms of dress, / She drags out what she wants in delays forever.[107]

Tura, the poem tells, was unable to start working because the sitter could not decide what to wear. All these examples clearly show the decisive role of the patron or sitter and suggest that it would have been unusual for the painter to have a voice in this matter.

Isabella herself seems to have considered her portraits to be a reliable source for her dress and hairstyle. Romano's portrait medal shows her in profile, wearing a necklace and her hair up in a knot, with some loose locks flowing freely, a hairstyle that was very unusual for a lady (fig. 96). Syson called it a 'vision of the antique'. Similarities to the likeness of the first Roman empress, Augustus' wife Livia, on antique coins have also been noted, especially in the way a lock of hair is braided alongside the ear (fig. 104).[108] A letter from her sister-in-law

---

[105] 'havemo uno retracto de la fe. me. delo Ill. o S. nostro patre, molto simile et buono, ma cum una beretta et zupone antiqui de quelli che se solevano usare. Voressimo farne cavare un altro da questo cum una beretta et zupone de quelli chel portava al tempo chel moritte; però vi pregamo vogliati mandarci uno de quelli suoi zuponi et beretta, che subito visto che li haverà il dipinctore ve li remettero.' Isabella to Girolamo Zigliolo, Mantua, 29 April 1512. Luzio 1913, p. 187, note 1. Translation partially cited from: Campbell 1990, p. 215.

[106] 'Magistro Benedicto, havemo visto el disegno che tu ne hay mandato, et per che sapij quello che haveray ad fare circha al vestire nostro, te dicemo che ne vestise doro de imbrocato, così la nostra illutrsissima consorte come nuy, facendo ad noy uno vestito curto.' Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Benedetto Ferrini, 8 November 1471. Syson 1996, p. 302.

[107] 'Sed dum consultat, que tantis commoda rebus / Tempora, quos habitus induat, annus abit. / Ver modo laudatur, modo dicitur aptior estas, / Nunc placet autunus, nuncqe probatur hyems. / Nunc cupit externis pingi velata capillos / Cultibus, & nuda nunc libet ese coma. / Dumqe diem, & varios alternat inepta paratus, / Quod cupit, in longas protrahit usqe moras.' Strozzi 1530, p. 155. Translation: Gilbert 1980, p. 187-188.

[108] On the improbability of this hairstyle, see: Welch 2008, p. 245-246. For the comparison with the antique, see: Syson 1997, p. 285 and Andres 1999, p. 260-262. Beverly Louise Brown, however, correctly brought up the fact that Isabella's hairdo is far more flamboyant than Livia's, see: Brown 2011, p. 46. The marriage medal of Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy (1457-1482), designed by Giovanni Filangieri Candida in or shortly after 1477, shows Mary with a more similar loose knot (fig. 105). Maximilian kept distributing it long after her death. It is important to examine whether this could have been an inspiration

Elisabetta Gonzaga to the Roman courtier Vincenzo Calmeta after the wedding of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este in 1502 informs us that this was not simply a matter of being portrayed *all'antica*, but rather that Isabella wore her hair coiffed this way during the wedding celebrations:

> The Lady Marchioness [Isabella d'Este] who was responsible for the hairstyles and ornaments says that Piceno [Benedetto da Cingoli] should not marvel that the Romans were so pleased by the way she put up her hair because if they had paid as close attention to the front of medals as they did to their reverses, then they would not have praised her hairstyle so lavishly [. . .] You show such admiration for our new hair fashions and for the way we are dressed differently from the others, that if with your subtle ingenuity you had considered it closely before you had seen it introduced you would not have been so surprised […][109]

In this letter Elisabetta emphasizes that even if the Romans had never seen Isabella before, they could have known about her new hairstyle and her dress from her portrait. This suggests a very close tie between dress in portraiture and Isabella's apparel at court, including the notion of status expressed through sumptuous clothing and the latest court fashions. Titian's portrait of *Isabella in Black* and Rubens's copy of *Isabella in Red* conform to this idea. On the other hand, Leonardo's cartoon, which depicts Isabella without any jewellery, is of a completely different nature. This plain representation is not found in any other portrait of Isabella.

It is fair to assume that the cartoon provides an accurate image of the envisaged result. In preparatory studies, it was common to include jewels and other accessories since they were an essential part of the court lady's wardrobe. For instance, a drawing by Bernardo Luini that has been identified as a study for the portrait of Ippolita Sforza (1481-c. 1520), wife of Alessandro Bentivoglio, in a fresco cycle in the church of San Maurizio in Milan shows the sitter with a long necklace of beads or pearls, a fan and the *capigliara* invented by Isabella (fig. 106).[110] The lack of jewellery in the Louvre cartoon appears to have been a deliberate choice, for the drawing's highly finished state suggests it was completed and no further additions were to be made.

Besides Leonardo's portrait of Isabella d'Este, I have come across only two other examples of court ladies portrayed in plain dress in the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1549 Eleanor of Toledo (1522-1562), Duchess of Florence and wife of Cosimo I de' Medici, through Cosimo's secretary Lorenzo Pagni, gave the following orders concerning a portrait Bronzino was to paint for her:

> Their Excellencies [Cosimo I de' Medici and Eleanor of Toledo] say that they are satisfied for the convenience of Bronzino and in order to hasten the completion of the portraits which the most Reverend

---

for Isabella. For this portrait medal and further references, see: Bern / Bruges / Vienna 2009, p. 224-225, 227, cat. 53i.

[109] 'La Sra Marchesa, a chi tocca la parte delli acconzamenti del capo, dice che 'l Piceno non si doveva maravigliare che li romani fussero tanto satisfacti de li ligamenti de li capelli suoi, perchè se havessero posto quella accurata diligentia in considerare el diritto de le medalie, che hanno facto de li riversi, non haveriano tanto laudato l'acconziatura de testa sua […] Voi mostrate tanta admiratione de le nove foggie de cappelli et del garbo diverso dalli altri, che se col vostro subtile ingegno ben l'havesti considerate iudicaresti che ad anteveduto fine fossero state introducte…' Elisabetta Gonzaga to Vincenzo Calmeta, Mantua, 1 May 1502. Luzio and Renier 1893, p. 118-119. Translation: Welch 2008, p. 245.

[110] For Luini's drawing, see: New York 2003, p. 663-666, cat. 131; Venice / Vienna 2004, p. 138. Examples are limited because very few cartoons have survived. Further evidence can be found in underdrawings, revealed through infrared reflectography. One of the few female portraits that have been examined is the portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi (fig. 61). The underdrawing does indeed include jewellery. For the results of this technical analysis, see: Sedano Espín 2010, p. 234-239.

Monsignor of Arras desires of them, that the clothing of the Duchess [Eleanor of Toledo] should not be made of gold brocade with loops, but of some other figured textile that would give a beautiful effect.[111]

Eleanor decided to be portrayed in a less expensive but nonetheless decorative fabric for the sake of speed only. In a following letter the secretary discusses sending Eleanor's garments of choice - a *robba* (formal overgown) of red satin - and those of her son Francesco to Bronzino.[112]

The second example is the extant portrait of Giulia Varano (1523-1547), Duchess of Urbino, executed by Titian in 1547 (fig. 107). Giulia does actually wear a lot of jewellery in this portrait, but the fabric is less ornate than she would have usually worn. According to Aretino, the portrait was painted after an oral description by her husband. Although it was apparently not necessary for the duchess to pose for her portrait, Titian minutely prescribed the kind of dress that should be sent from Urbino to Venice in order to complete the portrait. Unfortunately, Giulia Varano did not possess a garment like the one Titian requested, but something similar was sent to the ambassador of Urbino in Venice with an accompanying letter:

We send you an undergown of her Ladyship the Duchess, which you in your turn can give to Titian, to whom you can say he would have been provided with one of greater importance had he not asked for crimson or pink velvet. Since her Ladyship does not have such a dress, she thinks this one of damask in the same colour will be according to your intention.[113]

The letters from Florence and Urbino show two different motives for portraying a sitter in less sumptuous dress than social standards would normally require. Eleanor of Toledo was pragmatic; her portrait had to be finished as soon as possible and a highly ornamented textile like gold brocade would have taken the painter too long to render. In the case of Giulia Varano, it was not her but the painter who made the choice. Why Titian preferred crimson velvet over a more 'important' textile, as Giulia Varano's courtier put it, remains a mystery, but he might have had artistic considerations and Giulia, or more likely her husband who commissioned the portrait, went along with it.

It seems to have been rather unusual for court ladies to be portrayed in less sumptuous garments than they would have worn for public occasions. Even though Giulia Varano is not depicted wearing gold brocade, she is shown with several pieces of jewellery. The formality of the profile view and the total lack of court jewellery in Leonardo's portrait of Isabella d'Este constitute a contradiction that Isabella must certainly have been aware of. Could it have been Leonardo who came up with this idea and, like Titian, prescribed a certain type of dress? If so,

---

[111] 'Queste Ecc.tie [Cosimo I de' Medici and Eleonora de Toledo] si contentano per commodità del Bronzino et per più celere speditione de' ritratti che desidera di loro Mons.re R.mo d'Aras [Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle] che il vestimento della Duchessa [Eleonora de Toledo] non si facci di broccato riccio, ma di qualche altro drappo ornato che faccj bella mostra.' Secretary Lorenzo Pagni to maggiordomo Pierfrancesco Riccio, 21 December 1549. ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 1175, 4, f.43. Accessible online through the Medici Archive Project's βια database: http://bia.medici.org/DocSources/src/docbase/ShareDocument.do?entryId=523 [accessed 2 October 2013]. Translation cited from: Monnas 2009, p. 192.

[112] Monnas 2009, p. 190-192. Eleanor's most famous portrait by Bronzino, now in the Uffizi (inv. no. 748), shows her wearing a sumptuous gold brocade dress with velvet pile. A copy is in the Wallace Collection in London (inv. no. P555). On Eleonora's dress, see: Niccoli and Orsi Landini 2005, p. 23-45, esp. p. 25 for the dress and its fabric in the Uffizi portrait.

[113] 'Si manda a V.S. una sottana di la S.ra Duchessa, accio che per sua parte la dia a Titiano, al quale potrà dire, che si saria data una di più importanza, se egli non hauesse adimandata una di uelluto cremisi o di rosato, de'quali non hauendo S.E. ha pensato, che questa di damasco del medisimo colore sia segondo il suo intento'. Paolo Maria to Gian Giacomo Leonardi, 8 February 1547. Campbell 1990, p. 145, 259.

why did Isabella agree to his suggestion? In order to answer that question, it is important to take a closer look at the relationship between patron and painter.

5. 'Leonardo the painter who is our friend'

Isabella is known to have been a critical, demanding and at times downright difficult patron. She hardly ever granted painters the liberty to pursue their own artistic ideas. For instance, she tried to convince Bellini to deliver her a painting for her *studiolo* but he refused because she would not allow him to paint his own invention. She finally won over Perugino instead. With the contract, he received a detailed drawing by Isabella, defining the position and movements of every figure that was to be included in the story. Glasser considers the finished painting 'not one of Perugino's most inspired works, perhaps because the too exact written specifications really left no room at all for creative imagination.'[114]

Artists who worked slowly could not count on her mercy either. To the painter Gianluca Liombeni, who was decorating her *studiolo*, she wrote:

> Since we have learnt by experience that you are as slow in finishing your work as you are in everything else, we send this to remind you that for once you must change your nature, and that if our *studiolo* is not finished on our return, we intend to put you into the dungeon of the *castello*. And this, we assure you, is no jest on our part.[115]

Liombeni was not the only artist Isabella threatened with imprisonment. The Mola brothers, who made marquetry for her, were told they could expect to be thrown in jail as well if they failed to finish their work in time.[116] Isabella also asked her brother Alfonso d'Este to lock up the goldsmith Ercole Fedeli in the dungeon of the *castello* of Ferrara, because he had kept her waiting on a pair of silver bracelets for four years.[117] Isabella even wanted to summon the renowned painter Bellini to court to retrieve the twenty-five ducats she had paid him, because he did not finish his work quickly enough. In the end, however, Isabella was prevented from doing so by her agent, who realised she did not have a case.[118]

Jennifer Fletcher has noted that Isabella's relationship with Leonardo da Vinci seems to have been incomparable to those she had with other artists. Although he never finished anything for the *marchesa*, she never threatened him, but rather kept sending kind letters. She even described him as 'Leonardo the painter […] who is our friend' in her correspondence.[119] For a long time, Isabella tried to persuade Leonardo to complete her portrait or to paint her

---

[114] Glasser 1977, p. 113-114.

[115] 'Havendo nui facto exeperientia che cussì sei longo a finire un'opera como sei de persona, te recordamo che'l te bisogna a questa volta mutare natura, perchè se non haverai finito el studiolo al retorno nostro te faremo mettere in presone in lo battiponte del Castello et non serrà zanza.' Isabella d'Este to Gianluca Liombeni, 6 November 1491. Luzio 1887, p. 17; Campbell 2004, p. 61. Translation: Cartwright 1903, vol. 1, p. 88-89.

[116] Isabella wrote: 'ma intendemo non vi seti mossi de la ostinata pigricia o deliberatione vostra ne pur mai vi seti dignati di responderni. Ho meritaresti altra admonitione che de una subita presonia: ma voressimo pur vincere lasinata vostra cum la Clemencia nostra, la quale in fine se convertera in severita. Pero che se per tutto Augusto non seranno finiti li quadri vi facino stentare in uno sfundo di Torre: ne vi valeranno scuse che ben spaino como toleti lavorerij da altri.' Isabella d'Este to the Mola brothers, 4 July 1506. Campbell 2004, p. 320, note 19.

[117] Fletcher 1981, p. 51; Cartwright 1903, vol. 1, p. 73.

[118] Brown 1982, p. 151-152.

[119] Fletcher 1981, p. 51. The letter concerns the acquisition of a pair of vases that first had to be judged by someone competent 'come seria Leonardo dipinctore quale staseva a Milano che è nostro amico', Isabella d'Este to Francesco Malatesta, Mantua 3 May 1502. Luzio 1888a, p. 46.

something else for her *studiolo* and retained her affectionate tone over the years. In April 1501 her Florentine agent Fra Pietro da Novellara warned her that 'Leonardo's life is changeable and greatly unsettled, because he seems to live from day to day'. He then describes the only work Leonardo had undertaken so far in Florence, which was the cartoon of Saint Anne. He concludes his letter with the disappointing observation that Leonardo was concentrating on his studies in geometry, 'having entirely lost patience with the paintbrush'.[120] In July that same year Isabella made a second attempt to obtain the portrait with the help of another agent, Manfredo de Manfredis. Even though De Manfredis wrote to inform her that 'he [Leonardo] had begun to do what your Excellency wished of him', this attempt proved unsuccessful too.[121]

Three years later, in 1504, the portrait was still not finished and Isabella wisely adjusted her wishes. She sent a letter to another agent, Agnolo Tovaglia, asking him to deliver the enclosed letter to Leonardo. After she had urged Tovaglia to see after Perugino's needs, who was finally working on a *historia* she wanted, she explained:

Desiring next above all to have something by Leonardo da Vinci, whom I know to be an excellent painter both by reputation and first hand, I have asked in the enclosed whether he might make me a figure of a young Christ at twelve years of age.[122]

In the letter directly addressed to Leonardo she wrote:

Having learned that you are staying in Florence, I entertain the hope that what I have so much desired, that is to have something by your hand, might be realised. When you were in these parts, and did my likeness in charcoal, you promised me you would portray me once more in colours. But because this would be almost impossible, since you are unable to move here, I beg you to fulfil your obligation to me by substituting for my portrait another figure that would be even more pleasing to me; that is to say to carry out for me a young Christ of about twelve years old […] done with that sweetness and gentleness which is the particular excellence of your art. If you please me in my great desire, know that apart from the payment which you yourself will determine, I will be so indebted that I should not think of anything else but gratifying you, and from now on I am ready to be at your service.[123]

---

[120] 'la vita di Leonardo è varia et indeterminiata forte, sicxhé pare vivere a gornata'; 'Dà opra forte ad la geometria, impacientissimo al penello'. Fra Pietro Novellara to Isabella d'Este, Florence, 3 April 1501. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 228-229. For this letter, see also: Paris 2012, p. 77-78, cat. 17 (with photo of the original document).

[121] 'che epso havea dato principio ad fare quello che desiderava epsa vostra signoria da lui'. Manfedo de Manfredis to Isabella d'Este, Florence, 31 July 1501. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 231.

[122] 'Apresso, desiderando nui summamente haver qualche cosa de Leonardo Vincio, il quale et per fama et per presentia conoscemo per excellentissimo pictore, gli scrivemo per l'alligata che'l vogli farmi una figura de uno Christo giovinetto de anni dodece.' Isabella d'Este to Agnolo Tovagli, Mantua, 14 May 1504. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 234-235.

[123] 'Intendo che seti fermato in Fiorenza siamo intrate in speranza de poter consequire quel che tanto havemo desiderato de havere qualche cosa de vostra mano; quando fusti in questa terra et che ne retrasti de carbono ne promettesti farne ogni mo una volta di colore. Ma perche questo saria quasi impossibele non havendo voi comodita di trasferirui in qua vi pregamo che volendo satisfare a lobligo de la fede che haveti cum noi voliati convertire el retratto nostro in un altra figura che ne sara anchor piu grata cioe farni un Christo giovenetto de anni circa duodeciche, [...] cum quella dulceza et suavita de aiere che haveti per arte peculiare in excellentia. Se serrimo da voi compiaciute de quest nostro summo desiderio, sapiati che, ultra che el pagamento che vui medemo voretivi restarimo talemnte obligate che non pensarimo in altro ch'a in farvi cosa grata, et ex nunc ne offerimo ad ogni commodo et piacer nostro.' Isabella d'Este to Leonardo da Vinci, Mantua 14 May 1504. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 235-236.

Isabella's attitude towards Leonardo is striking. She plays a rhetorical game in which it is not the painter who is supposed to be at her service, but rather she at his. Leonardo can name his price and any convenience he needs will be taken care of. This letter is not only an example of the exceptionally accommodating way Isabella approached Leonardo. Her request to convert her portrait into a picture of a young Christ shows just how important it was to Isabella to own a painting by Leonardo, even if it was not the painted portrait she had originally requested. The reason for this change in subject – the impossibility of posing for her likeness – is remarkable as well. Portraits were usually not painted from life, but based upon a drawing that could be made in one sitting, as Leonardo had already done in Mantua.[124] It was a tactful way of acknowledging that Leonardo simply refused to paint her likeness. Trying to seduce him to paint something else was the only thing Isabella could do.

Tovaglia's reply was telling. He promised to encourage both Perugino and Leonardo to speed up their work. He was not very hopeful, however, and suspected that the two painters: 'will vie with one another in slowness. I do not know in this respect which of the two will outdo the other, but I feel sure that it will be Leonardo who wins'.[125] In spite of his earlier commitment to Isabella's wishes, Leonardo did not start working on the picture and in October 1504 Isabella once more tried to persuade Leonardo, recalling her request in a letter Tovaglia was to present to him:

> Some months ago I wrote to you that I wanted to have a young Christ of about twelve years old by your hand. […], owing to the many commissioned works that you have in your hand I fear you have not remembered mine; therefore I decided to write these few lines begging you – when you have had enough of the Florentine history – to begin this small figure as a diversion, for it would be pleasing to me and useful to you. Be well.[126]

Francis Ames-Lewis is right to characterize Isabella's attitude towards Leonardo in this correspondence as 'tolerant almost to the point of indulgence'. It is strikingly different from the tone with which she addressed painters like Perugino or Bellini, even though Leonardo was just as slow, or even slower, in delivering what she wanted.[127] It had become a matter of prestige for Isabella to own a work by Leonardo's hand.

Isabella undertook a final attempt in late spring 1506, turning to Leonardo's uncle, Alessandro Amadori. He ensured Isabella that he was 'at all times the agent of your Excellency with Leonardo da Vinci my nephew' and that Leonardo would start working soon.[128] Isabella gratefully replied: 'I appreciate the skill with which you deal with Leonardo da Vinci to induce

---

[124] Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 101. On drawings and cartoons for portraits, see: Bambach 1999, p. 106

[125] 'tamen me dubito forte non habbino ad fare insieme ad ghara de tarditate. Non so chi in questo supererà l'uno l'altro, tengho per certo Lionardo habbi a essere vincitore.' Agnolo Tovaglia to Isabella d'Este, Florence, 27 May 1504. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 236.

[126] 'Le mesi passati ve scrivessimo che desideravimo havere uno Christo giovane de anni circa duodeci de mane vostra; […], ma per le molte allegate opere ch haveti a le mani dubitamo non vi raccordati de la nostra: perhò n'è parso farvi questi pochi versi, pregandovi che, quando seti fastidito de la histroia fiorentina, vogliati per recreatione mettervi a fare questa figuretta, che ce fareti cosa gratissima, et a vui utile. Benevalete.' Isabella d'Este to Leonardo da Vinci, Mantua, 31 October 1504. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 238.

[127] Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 36.

[128] 'ogni hora procuratore di vostra excellentia con Lionardo da Vinci, mio nipote', Alessandro Amadori to Isabella d'Este, Florence, 3 May 1506. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 238-239.

him to satisfy me regarding those figures I asked him for'.[129] Like all previous efforts, Amadori's intervention proved unsuccessful. Isabella had done her utmost, pressing four different agents over a period of six years to persuade Leonardo, all to no avail. Isabella never received the desired portrait 'in colour', nor the painting of the young Christ.

As badly as Isabella treated her other portraitists, either by criticizing their depictions of her likeness or simply rejecting them, she acclaimed Leonardo's sketches, even though he portrayed her without the jewellery she valued so much. Given the importance of a lady's finery, Isabella herself would have never thought of omitting it from her portrait. It was clearly Leonardo who had made the choices regarding dress and jewellery in his portraits. Had it been any other painter, Isabella would probably have rejected such a design. No other painter or sculptor ever depicted her in this highly unusual way.[130] Such was his position that Leonardo was granted a degree of artistic freedom – even by one of the most demanding patrons – that was incomparable to that given any other painter of his time. This allowed him to pursue his own ideas on dress and beauty in portraiture. In her letter to Isabella, written in April 1498, Cecilia Gallerani expressed the idea that there was no painter to be found who could match Leonardo. Being portrayed by a master of his stature, even in plain dress, bestowed more honour on Isabella than any jewellery ever could.

[129] 'né manco ce piace la dextresa che usati cum Leonardo Vincio per disponerlo ad satisfarmi di quelle figure che gli havimo rechieste', Isabella d'Este to Alessandro Amadori, Mantua, 12 May 1506. Ames-Lewis 2012, p. 239-240.

[130] The Kimbell Art Museum has a terra cotta bust that is sometimes identified as Isabella d'Este on the basis of similarities with Leonardo's portrait cartoon (Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum, inv. no. AP 2004.01). Although this sitter appears not to have been wearing jewellery, the overall appearance of the sitter's dress must have been far more luxurious. Traces of polychromy show the bust was originally coloured and may have included painted jewellery. At the shoulders, holes have been made in the clay in order to decorate the sleeves with real ribbons. On the identification and state of the bust, see: Radcliffe, Baker and Maek-Gérard 1992, p. 68-73; Potts 2005, p. 41.

5. Dress in *Mona Lisa*

Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, or *La Gioconda*, is not only the most renowned Renaissance portrait, it is the most famous painting ever made (fig. 6). This last extant portrait by Leonardo resides in the Louvre. He portrayed the female sitter in a chair on a balcony with a panoramic view of a mountainous landscape and a river. The sitter has her hands on the armrest of the chair and her face shows the most familiar feature of the painting, her smile. The iconic status of this portrait has inspired a huge number of academic and non-academic publications. There are many controversies regarding the identity of the sitter and the interpretation of the painting as a whole. In fact, the scholarly attention that *Mona Lisa* has attracted over the centuries is too vast and varied to be summarized here.[1] Instead, this chapter focuses entirely on her dress, an aspect that has received relatively little attention.in comparison to the landscape in the background or the sitter's smile.

Over the course of more than a century several art historians and, surprisingly, archaeologists have suggested a number of highly diverging interpretations of Mona Lisa's attire. On the basis of her dress, the sitter has been said to be a mourning mother, a widow, a fashionable Florentine lady dressed 'alla Spagnola', a mother who has just given birth and is still wearing maternity dress, and even a prostitute. Remarkably, most of the scholars who have launched new hypotheses did not care to comment on the previous theories, let alone prove them wrong. Notwithstanding the continuously growing body of research on *Mona Lisa*, the fact remains that the garments worn by the sitter have never been studied by a dress historian.

In any discussion of the meaning of Mona Lisa's attire, the issue of the identity of the sitter looms large. The traditional identification as Lisa Gherardini, wife of the silk merchant Francesco del Giocondo, is based on Vasari's account. Other suggestions that have been put forward include Isabella d'Este, Costanza d'Avalos, a mistress of Giuliano de' Medici, and a generic type of a beautiful woman.[2] In 1981 Martin Kemp pointed out that if *Mona Lisa* was not so famous, 'we would have no difficulty in accepting it as yet another portrait from the Renaissance of a sitter unknown to us'.[3] By consistently using the title *Portrait of a Lady on a Balcony* instead of *Mona Lisa*, Kemp emphasized our ignorance of the sitter's identity. However, new evidence confirming the identification as Lisa Gherardini has recently come to light. This chapter therefore starts with a survey of the earliest sources on the historical Lisa Gherardini and her portrait by Leonardo, followed by a critical overview of all existing hypotheses on Mona Lisa's dress.

Since none of the prevailing interpretations is convincing, the second part of this chapter aims to establish a new reading of Lisa's dress. At first sight, Lisa seems to be wearing dark colours. Her head is covered with a veil and the absence of jewellery is striking, as it is in Leonardo's portraits of Ginevra de' Benci and Isabella d'Este (figs. 1, 5). Results from technical analysis of the paint layers are compared with contemporary Florentine written and visual sources to determine exactly what Lisa is wearing. Special attention is paid to the appearance of

[1] On the history of the painting and its iconic status, see: Sassoon 2001. For references to the most significant contributions on *Mona Lisa*, see: Marani 1999, p. 206, note 86.
[2] For an overview of different hypotheses on the sitter's identity, see: Shell and Sironi 1991, p. 98-99, with references to further literature.
[3] Kemp 1981, p. 268.

the dress during the consecutive stages of the painting process to provide further insight into Leonardo's working procedure and the tenets of art theory that may have guided him. The pictorial sources for Mona Lisa's dress are traced to determine whether Leonardo depicted actual contemporary fashion or took some poetic license. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Leonardo's view on the depiction of contemporary dress in painting.

1. The portrait of Lisa Gherardini

For a long time, Vasari's life of Leonardo da Vinci was the only source supporting the identification of the sitter of the *Mona Lisa* as Lisa Gherardini. Vasari wrote:

> Leonardo undertook to execute, for Francesco del Giocondo, the portrait of Mona Lisa, his wife; and after toiling over it for four years, he left it unfinished; and the work is now in the collection of King Frances of France, at Fontainebleau.[4]

Since several other early sources provide contradictory information, Vasari's testimony has often been called into question. Bernardo Vecchietti, author of the codex known as the Anonimo Magliabecchiano, does not mention a portrait of Lisa Gherardini in his life of Leonardo. Instead, he refers to a portrait of her son, stating that Leonardo 'portrayed Piero di Francesco del Giocondo from life'.[5] Doubt about Vasari's identification was further fostered by the travel account of Antonio de Beatis, secretary to cardinal Luigi of Aragon. On 10 October 1517 the cardinal paid a visit to Leonardo's workshop at Château de Clou near Amboise, where he was shown three paintings, including a portrait that is usually identified as the *Mona Lisa*. De Beatis described it as 'one [painting] of a certain Florentine woman, made on the instigation of the late Giuliano de' Medici'.[6] This led to a wide-ranging speculation on the identity of Leonardo's sitter. A poem by Enea Irpino, dedicated to a portrait of a women wearing a black veil painted by Leonardo da Vinci, also gave rise to alternative identifications.[7]

Recently, however, a much earlier source has come to light, confirming Vasari's account of the identity of Leonardo's sitter. In 2005 Armin Schlechter discovered a margin comment that mentions the portrait in an incunabula of Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* that appeared in Bologna in 1470 and is now kept in the Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.[8] Between 1493 and 1530 notes were added by different hands, most extensively by Agostino Vespucci, vice-chancellor of the Florentine Republic and assistant to Macchiavelli, in 1503. In one of the passages, Cicero describes a work by Apelles: 'Apelles perfected the head and bust of his Venus

---

[4] 'Prese Lionardo a fare per Francesco del Giocondo il ritratto di Monna Lisa sua moglie, e quattro anni penatovi lo lasciò imperfetto, la quale opera oggi è appresso il re Francesco di Francia in Fontanableò', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 30. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 635.

[5] 'Ritrasse dal natural Piero Francesco del Giocondo', Fabriczy 1893, p. 89. For an extensive discussion of this source and the improbability of Leonardo having painted the portrait of Piero del Giocondo, see: Zöllner 1993, p. 116-118.

[6] 'uno di certa donna Firentina facta di naturale ad istantia del quondam mag.co Juliano de Medici', Itinerario di Monsignor R.mo et Ill.mo il Cardinale de Aragonia, per me dom. Antonio de Beatis, 10 October 1517. Beltrami 1919, p. 149, no. 238.

[7] The poem is published in: Vecce 1990, p. 62. For an overview of the different suggestions that have been put forward, see: Shell and Sironi 1991, p. 98-99.

[8] The discovery was first published in 2005, but only became widely known after a second publication that sparked substantial coverage in the popular press in 2007. Schlechter published his findings more extensively online in: Schlechter 2008, with references to the previous publications under no. 3.

with the most elaborate art, but left the rest of her body in the rough.'[9] Vespucci noted in the margin: 'Apelles the painter. Thus Leonardo da Vinci does in all his paintings, as is the head of Lisa del Giocondo and of Anne, mother of the Virgin. We will see what he will do in the Hall of the Great Council, he now made an agreement with the *gonfaloniere* [Piero Soderini]. 1503, October'.[10] This source is now generally regarded as the definitive confirmation of Vasari's statement.[11]

Archival research conducted by Frank Zöllner and more recently by Giuseppe Pallanti has established the basic facts of the lives of Lisa Gherardini and her husband, Francesco del Giocondo. Lisa Gherardini was born on 15 June 1479 as the first daughter of Antonmaria di Noldo Gherardini's third marriage. Antonmaria had previously married Lisa Carducci in 1465 and Caterina Rucellai in 1473, who both died in childbirth. In 1476 he remarried Lucrezia di Galeotto Spinello, Lisa's mother.[12] Given Antonmaria's tax declaration of 1480, the family was not very rich and had only a moderate income from farms and land near Florence.[13] Consequently, when Lisa married Francesco del Giocondo in March 1495, her dowry was modest, consisting of 170 gold florins cash and several parcels of land south of Florence, near the Gherardini country estate.[14] Unfortunately, no inventory of Lisa's trousseau listing her garments and accessories survived.

Francesco del Giocondo (1465-1538) owned a prosperous silk business, which he had inherited from his father. The Giocondo family belonged to the Florentine ruling class and Francesco held several political offices during his career. In 1491 he had married Camilla Rucellai, who gave birth to a son, named Bartolommeo, in February 1493. The next year, however, Camilla died in childbirth.[15] Francesco signed the wedding contract for his second marriage, to Lisa Gherardini, on 5 March 1495. Lisa bore her husband five children: Piero (b.

---

[9] 'Nunc ut Appelles Veneris caput & summa pectoris politissima arte perfecit: reliquam partem corporis incohatam reliquit', Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares*, Heidelberg, University Library, inv. no. D 7620 qt. Inc. (GW 6821), fol. 11a. Cited from: Schlechter 2008, no. 102. Translation: Burke 2008, p. 4. Cicero refers to a passage from Pliny's *Historia naturalis* on the same subject.

[10] '[Apelles] pictor. Ita leonar/dus uincius facit in omnibus suis / picturis. ut est Caput lisę del giocondo. et annę matris uirginis / videbimus quid faciet de aula / magni consilii. de qua re conuenit / iam cum vexillario. 1503. 8bris', Cicero-Inkunabel D 7620 qt. Inc. (GW 6821), fol. 11a (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg). Cited from: Schlechter 2008, no. 104. Translation: Burke 2008, p. 4. See also: Paris 2012, p. 120-121, cat. 30 (with photo of the original document).

[11] See: Burke 2008, p. 4.

[12] Pallanti 2006, p. 37.

[13] Antonmaria owned a house in the city near Santa Trinita and a *casa signorile* in San Donato a Poggio, south of Florence. However, in 1480 the family lived in a rented house in the Santo Spirito quarter, because their own house was too severely damaged. Apparently, there were no means to restore it. See: Zöllner 1993, p. 118-119.

[14] The value of the land is not specified in the documents, but according to Zöllner it could not have been more than 400 florins. Antonmaria Gherardini had not invested a sum of money in the city's dowry fund, the *Monte delle doti*, for his daughter. The cash portion of Lisa's dowry was probably financed by selling some land. See: Zöllner 1993, p. 118-119, 132-133, notes 42-43 (with reference to the archival documents); Pallanti 2006, p. 41, 57-58.

[15] Pallanti 2006, p. 52-55. Older literature states that Francesco del Giocondo had been married twice before marrying Lisa Gherardini. First to Camilla Rucellai, followed by a marriage to Tommasa di Mariotto Villani in 1493, who then died in childbirth too within a year. First stated in the 1851 Le Monnier edition of Vasari's *Vite*, without further reference, cited in: Zöllner 1993, p. 117 and esp. p. 131 note 23. Archival documents mention the death of 'Francesco del Giocondo's wife' in 1494, without specifying her name. Pallanti found no reference to the supposed marriage of Francesco and Tommasa and, since it is unlikely that Francesco remarried so quickly, he believes that the 1494 document refers to his first wife, Camilla.

1496), Camilla (b. 1499), Andrea (b. 1502), Giocondo (b. 1507) and Marietta (year of birth unknown).

Francesco must have asked Leonardo to paint a portrait of his wife Lisa no later than the spring of 1503, given the fact that Agostino Vespucci mentioned the – still unfinished – portrait in October that same year. Leonardo had returned to Florence in late February or early March 1503, after having served as architect and engineer to Cesare Borgia from August 1502 onwards. The reason for the commission is not known, but Zöllner put forward two different suggestions. On 5 April 1503 Francesco bought a house of his own. Before that time, he, his wife and their children had been living in his parental home with the rest of the Giocondo family. This purchase may have provided the occasion to commission a portrait to decorate the new home. Otherwise, the portrait might have been meant to celebrate the birth of Andrea in 1502.[16]

For reasons unknown, though, the portrait was never delivered to Francesco del Giocondo. Maybe it was not ready in time or Leonardo did not want to part with it. As Vasari stated, even after four years the portrait was not finished and Leonardo took it with him when he moved to Milan in 1508 and to Rome in 1513. Joanna Woods-Marsden even suggested that Francesco might have declined the portrait because of the unusual way his wife was represented in it, wearing dark dress without jewellery.[17] In any case, after several years of travelling and returning to Florence every so often, Leonardo went to France in 1516, where he found employment as a court painter to Francis I.[18] There, in Leonardo's French workshop, the *Mona Lisa* was admired and described by Antonio de Beatis. Over the years Leonardo continued to work on the portrait, adjusting the dress and the background, a subject that is discussed below.

There are still questions about what exactly happened to the *Mona Lisa* after Leonardo's death on 2 May 1519. For a long time it was believed the portrait was directly incorporated into the collection of Francis I. However, Shell and Sironi's publication in 1991 of the posthumous inventory of the possessions of Leonardo's pupil and companion Salaì dated 21 April 1524 has cast doubt on this. Salaì had returned to Milan after Leonardo's death. The inventory lists several paintings that were among his possessions, including: 'a painting called la Joconda'.[19] Given its estimated value of 100 *scudi* and 505 *lire*, half the price of Salaì's house, Shell and Sironi believed this to be the original rather than a copy and on that basis claimed the portrait was in Milan in the 1520s.[20] In 1999 Bertrand Jestaz published yet another newly discovered document concerning the sale of a number of unspecified paintings to Francis I by Salaì in 1518.[21] Salaì received twice the amount mentioned in the inventory, which led Jestaz to conclude that the paintings listed in the inventory were all copies and that he had sold the originals to the king.[22] Although it seems likely that *Mona Lisa* stayed in France after Leonardo's death, this document does not provide absolute certainty as to its whereabouts, as Jestaz suggests. Since no specific

[16] Zöllner 1993, p. 122-123.
[17] Woods-Marsden 2001, p. 79-80.
[18] On *Mona Lisa*'s (and Leonardo's) whereabouts between 1506 and 1516, see: Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 152, cat. IV-5.
[19] 'Quadro [in margin with carat mark] dicto la Joconda [cancelled: dicto la honda]', Shell and Sironi 1991, p. 96.
[20] The amount of 100 *sudi* and 505 *lire* for a painting is exceptionally high in the early sixteenth century. By comparison, three panel paintings by Francesco Napolitano were sold for eighty *scudi* in 1502 and Bernardino de' Conti was only paid six *scudi* for two paintings in 1522. See: Shell and Sironi 1991, p. 96-103.
[21] The document reads: 'a messire Salay de Pietredorain, paintre, pour quelques tables de paintures qu'il a baillées au Roy, II^{M} VI^{C} IIII l.t. III s. IIII d.', cited from: Jestaz 1999, p. 69.
[22] Jestaz 1999, p. 70-71.

paintings are mentioned, it remains uncertain which or even how many paintings were sold to Francis I in 1518.

The *Mona Lisa* must have been acquired by Francis I at some point before the mid-1540s, either in 1518 or later. Vasari states that the portrait was at Fontainebleau in the first edition of his *Vite*, completed in 1547, which is confirmed by the painter and art theorist Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1592), who wrote around 1563: 'The portrait of Mona Lisa, which he worked on for four years, [even if] as yet unfinished shows perfectly what nature and art together are capable of doing. The portrait is now in France at Fontainebleau.'[23] Even though Vasari had probably never seen the portrait, he must have heard about it. His well-known passage on the portrait, an elaboration of the topos of lifelikeness reflecting the Petrarchan idiom of female beauty rather than an accurate description of the painting itself, shows the fame that *Mona Lisa* had already acquired in the sixteenth century:[24]

In this head, whoever wished to see how closely art could imitate nature, was able to comprehend it with ease; for in it were counterfeited all the minutenesses that with subtlety are able to be painted, seeing that the eyes had that lustre and watery sheen which are always seen in life, and around them were all those rosy and pearly tints, as well as the lashes, which cannot be represented without the greatest subtlety. The eyebrows, through his having shown the manner in which the hairs spring from the flesh, here more close and here more scanty, and curve according to the pores of the skin, could not be more natural. The nose, with its beautiful nostrils, rosy and tender, appeared to be alive. The mouth, with its opening, and with its ends united by the red of the lips to the flesh-tints of the face, seemed, in truth, to be not colours but flesh. In the pit of the throat, if one gazed upon it intently, could be seen the beating of the pulse. And, indeed, it may be said that it was painted in such a manner as to make every valiant craftsman, be he who he may, tremble and lose heart.[25]

2.1. Mother in mourning dress

In 1864 the well-known art critic Théophile Gautier discussed *Mona Lisa* in his book *Les dieux et demi-dieux de la peinture*, adding the discerning remark that the colours had darkened over the

[23] 'Redussi sì a perfizione, non essendo ancora finito, il riratto di Mona Lisa, dretto al quale stei quattro anni; ma ciò che la natura e l'arte insieme si pol fare fei; et il qual ritratto ore è in Francia a Fontanableo.' Lomazzo 1973-75, vol. 1, p. 109. Translation cited from: Cox-Rearick 1995, p. 152. Greenstein regards Lomazzo's text as 'nothing other than a summary of Vasari's story', but at the same time he points out that the Milanese Lomazzo was very well informed about Leonardo and his oeuvre through Francesco Melzi, who was living in Milan at the time as well. See: Greenstein 2004, p. 22.

[24] Marani believes that Vasari could not have written such a detailed description without actually seeing the portrait. He suggests that if the *Mona Lisa* was indeed in Italy in the 1520s and 1530s because Salaì had brought it to Milan, it is possible that it was taken to Florence, where Leonardo enjoyed a great reputation as a portraitist. See: Marani 1999, p. 194-195. Given the Petrarchan commonplaces used by Vasari, it seems equally likely that he only knew *Mona Lisa* from hearsay. Vasari's indebtness to Petrarch was noted by: Rubin 1990, p. 42.

[25] 'nella qual testa chi voleva veder quanto l'arte potesse imitar la natura, agevolmente si poteva comprendere, perchè quivi erano contrafatte tutte le minuzie che si possono con sottigliezza dipignere. Avvenga che gli occhi avevano que' lustri e quelle acquitrine, che di continuo si veggono nel vivo; et intorno a essi erano tutti que' rossigni lividi et i peli, che non senza grandissima sottigliezza si possono fare. Le ciglia per avervi fatto il modo del nascere i peli nella carne, dove più folti e dove più radi, e girare secondo i pori della carne, non potevano essere più naturali. Il naso, con tutte quelle belle aperture rossette e tenere, si vedeva essere vivo. La bocca, con quella sua sfenditura con le sue fini unite dal rosso della bocca con l'incarnazione del viso, che non colori, ma carne pareva veramente. Nella fontanella della gola, chi intentissimamente la guardava, vedeva battere i polsi: e nel vero si può dire che questa fussi dipinta d'una maniera da far tremare e temere ogni gagliardo artefice e sia qual si vuole.' Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 30-31. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 635-636.

ages, which had caused the sitter to look almost like a widow, dressed in mourning.[26] Modern technical research has confirmed Gautier's assessment of the painting's darkening. Some pigments of the dress have blackened through chemical reactions, while original colours that have remained unimpaired are hidden under a layer of discoloured varnish and surface dirt.[27] Nevertheless, the authors of most theories on Mona Lisa's attire took the colours as they appear now at face value, entirely ignoring the result of discolouration. While Gautier merely remarked that these darkened colours make Mona Lisa's dress look like mourning garb, subsequent scholars, even more recent ones, have suggested she actually was in mourning.

The first scholar to suggest that Lisa is depicted in mourning garb was the French archaeologist Salomon Reinach in 1909. He took his lead from Vasari, accepting the identification of the sitter as Lisa Gherardini, and supposed Leonardo started working on the portrait in 1501. He mentioned archival evidence suggesting that Lisa had lost a daughter in 1499. However, Lisa's first daughter Camilla, who was born in 1499, lived to adulthood, dying in 1518, whereas her second daughter was born after 1507.[28] Reinach found further circumstantial evidence for Lisa's mourning in Vasari's remark that Leonardo invited buffoons and musicians to his studio to cheer her up while she was posing for him: [29]

> He made use, also, of this device: Mona Lisa being very beautiful, he always employed, while he was painting her portrait, persons to play or sing, and jesters, who might make her remain merry, in order to take away that melancholy which painters are often wont to give to the portraits that they paint. And in this work of Leonardo's there was a smile so pleasing, that it was a thing more divine than human to behold; and it was held to be something marvellous, since the reality was not more alive.[30]

Furthermore, Reinach concluded that the dark olive green and brown colours of Lisa's dress, the transparent black veil worn over her head and the absence of jewellery were characteristics of mourning attire. He found support for this in some letters by Isabella d'Este. When Isabella's mother, Eleanor of Aragon, died in 1493, Isabella asked her sister Beatrice to send her veils to cover her head.[31] Isabella also requested an informant to report to her on her sister's dress. On 25 October 1493 she was informed that Beatrice's mourning attire consisted of 'a dress of brown cloth with rather long sleeves of brown cloth, and on her head a cap of brown silk with veils over it that are neither yellow nor grey, but pure white'.[32] For the jewellery, Reinach referred to Isabella's letter to her husband in which she tried to prevent him from

---

[26] 'Le costume, par la carbonisation des couleurs, est devenu presque celui d'une veuve […]', Gautier, Houssaye and Saint-Victoir 1864, p. 24.
[27] For the results of technical research on the colours of *Mona Lisa*, see: Martin 2006, p. 60-64.
[28] Reinach refers to Müntz, who in turn referred to a certain Carli, who had told him that the *Libro dei Morti* in the ASF lists 'una fanciulla di Francesco del Giocondo, riposte in Santa Maria Novella', dated 1 June 1499 (no inv. no. given). See: Müntz 1899, p. 416. Lisa' daughter Camilla was born in 1499, and entered the convent of San Domenico di Cafaggio at the age of ten. She died young of an unknown illness in 1518 at the age of eighteen. See: Pallanti 2006, p. 61-62.
[29] Reinach 1909, p. 21.
[30] 'Usovvi ancora questa arte, che essendo mona Lisa bellissima, teneva mentre che la ritraeva chi sonasse o cantasse, e di continuo buffoni che la facessino stare allegra per levar via quel malinconico che suol dar spesso la pittura a' ritratti che si fanno: et in questo di Lionardo vi era un ghigno tanto piacevole che era cosa più divina che umana a vederlo, et era tenuta cosa maravigliosa per non essere il vivo altrimenti.' Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 31. Translation: Vasari 1996, p. 636.
[31] Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 459; Reinach 1909, p. 21.
[32] 'un vestito in corpo di panno bruno cum maniche de panno bruno assai longa, et in testa una scuffia di seta bruna cum li veleti di sopra non gialli nè greggi, ma pur bianchi', Leonardo Aristeo to Isabella d'Este, Milan, 25 October 1493. Luzio and Renier 1896, p. 460; Reinach 1909, p. 22.

pawning her last jewels, writing: 'I shall be left entirely without jewels and shall be obliged to wear black, because to appear in coloured silks and brocades without jewels would be ridiculous.'[33] This passage led Reinach to believe that the absence of jewellery was a characteristic of mourning garb, 'just as it is today'.[34]

First of all, Reinach's use of sources is problematic in that he applied evidence from a courtly context to the portrait of a Florentine citizen's wife. Moreover, his views on Renaissance mourning dress stem from practices of his own day. In the nineteenth and early-twentieth century an elaborate mourning etiquette was maintained, not only among the highest levels of society but also by the middle class. Mourning garb was obligatory for a prescribed period and consisted of black dress with a black veil without jewellery or, depending on the stage of mourning, special mourning jewellery.[35]

Late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento mourning practices, however, were less strict and did not require mourning garb after the death of a young child. The Florentine government occasionally even decided to limit the use of special mourning garments in an attempt to curb expenses. For this reason, a sumptuary law surrounding deaths and funerals was issued in 1473. Fathers were not allowed to wear *panni bruni* (mourning dress) after the death of a child under twenty-five, except for a black *cappuccio* (chaperon). The law was even stricter for women. There were only two occasions on which they were allowed to wear mourning garb, either after the death of their father or mother for no longer than six months or after being widowed for as long as they wanted. In any other case, including the death of a child, whether underage or adult, the law prescribed normal dress.[36] Given the high child mortality rates in this period, it seems likely parents did not wear mourning garb for every deceased child and certainly not for a period of more than two years.

Adolfo Venturi, the second adherent to the mourning garb theory, identified the sitter differently. He connected the portrait to four sonnets and two madrigals by Enea Irpino, dedicated to the portrait by Leonardo of a lady by many believed to be Costanza d'Avolos (c. 1460-c. 1541), widow of Federico del Balzo (d. 1483). In one of these poems, Irpino states that she is to be painted 'under her black veil'.[37] Venturi identified *Mona Lisa* as the portrait mentioned in the poems and interpreted the head covering of the sitter as Costanza's black widow's veil.[38]

---

[33] Isabella d'Este to Francesco Gonzaga, Mantua, 27 August 1496. The letter is cited in greater part in chapter 4, p. 119.

[34] 'Ainsi, avec des vêtements de deuil, mais avec ceux-là seulement, il était d'usage, alors comme aujourd'hui, de ne pas porter de bijoux.' Reinach 1909, p. 21. Reinach's theory was followed by: Schiaparelli 1921, p. 172.

[35] On nineteenth-century mourning dress practices, see: Cunnington and Lucas 1972, p. 247-255; Taylor 1983, p. 120-163.

[36] The law was issued on 27 April 1473 and has been published by: Rainey 1985, app. 12, p. 773-781. For the regulations on 'panni bruni', see: p. 779, no. 11.

[37] 'Per finger lei sotto il negro velo'. For the complete poem, see: Vecce 1990, p. 62. On Irpino's *canzoniere*, to which this poem belongs, see: Bolzoni 2008, p. 183-185.

[38] Venturi 1925, vol. 1, p. 40-42. Robert Langton Douglas tried to disprove Venturi's theory, arguing that the sitter was Lisa Gherardini dressed in contemporary fashion with a hairstyle 'alla francese', i.e. her hair flowing loosely over her shoulders and gathered in a veil held in place by a ribbon. He argued, without backing his statements with sources, that Isabella and Beatrice d'Este wore this informal hairstyle at home, while they appear in their portraits coiffed in a formal style. See: Douglas 1944, p. 118. Although Douglas was right to reject Venturi's suggestion that the sitter is a widow, his arguments are not plausible. His description of the hairstyle 'alla francese' corresponds with Leonardo's portrait drawing of Isabella d'Este, in which her hair is covered with a light veil, secured by a *lenza* (fig. 5). Lisa Gherardini's hairdo, however, is different, with long locks of curly hair hanging loosely on either side of her face.

The mourning dress hypothesis suddenly reappeared in 1990, when Carlo Vecce reinstated Venturi's version of the theory, relating *Mona Lisa* to Irpino's poems. Vecce, however, pointed out that Irpino mentions the first name 'Isabella' in one of the sonnets and argued that Irpino's lady was not Costanza d'Avalos, but rather Isabella Gualandi, who was widowed at a young age.[39] By contrast, Janice Shell and Grazioso Sironi followed Reinach's suggestion. In their article on Salaì's posthumous inventory, in which they confirmed the identity of the sitter as Lisa Gherardini, they continued to promulgate the idea that she had lost a daughter in 1499. Leaving no doubt as to their interpretation of her dress, they wrote she 'is clearly dressed in mourning'.[40] However, as has become clear, the evidence in favour of the mourning garb theories is meagre at best and technical analysis has since effectively undermined this hypothesis. Pigment analysis has revealed that Mona Lisa's dress was probably brownish green rather than black and her sleeves bright yellow.[41] Before considering the results of technical examination in more detail, other theories on Mona Lisa's dress put forward after Reinach and Venturi will be considered first.

2.2. Fashionably virtuous Florentine wife

Frank Zöllner, who still believed Mona Lisa's veil to be black, proposed a different reading of the garment. In his view, a black veil was not necessarily indicative of mourning, but part of a married woman's attire. In Florence, he wrote, women were only allowed to forego a veil for a period of up to two or three years after getting married.[42] Moreover, an etiquette book for young girls, published in Venice, recommended black as an appropriate colour for the 'first nuptial dress'.[43] Zöllner therefore argued that Lisa's black veil conveyed her married status and the virtues associated with it, such as chastity and piety. At the same time, he acknowledged that black veils are a rarity in Florentine portraiture. He explained the predominance of black and other dark colours in Lisa's dress as influence from Spanish fashion. At the start of the sixteenth century Spanish black dress became popular in Northern Italy, to which the vogue for black during the wedding festivities of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este testifies. Zöllner assumed that Francesco del Giocondo, being a silk merchant, was aware of the latest trends and dressed his wife accordingly.[44] Lisa's dress therefore strikes a balance between 'a personal wish for expressing her virtue and her desire to be dressed fashionably', as Zöllner put it.[45]

As in the case of Reinach's mourning dress hypothesis, Zöllner's interpretation of the primary material is questionable. Oddly, he failed to provide the source for his statement that married women were obliged to cover their heads with a veil. As far as I know, such regulations do not appear in the Florentine sumptuary legislation of the fifteenth and early sixteenth

---

[39] Vecce 1990, p. 61-72.
[40] Shell and Sironi 1991, p. 102. In a footnote they added the anachronistic nuance that Lisa's dress could be half-mourning as well, which is another nineteenth-century concept.
[41] Martin 2006, p. 64.
[42] Zöllner 1993, p. 126, 136-137, note 106.
[43] 'primo vestimento nvptiale', *Decor puellarum*, published in Venice in 1471 (although the title page erroneously states 1461, which is impossible because the publisher only started his business in Venice in 1470, see: Gerulaitis 1976, p. 23). Cited from: Zöllner 1993, p. 126.
[44] Daniel Arasse followed Zöllner's theory, but added that it may have been Leonardo himself rather than Francesco del Giocondo who suggested the black veil. See: Arasse 1997, p. 389.
[45] Zöllner 1993, p. 126-127. For the wedding festivities of Lucrezia Borgia, Zöllner refers to: Butazzi 1983, p. 58. For descriptions of the attire of the bride and the wedding guests in the letters of Isabella d'Este, see also: D'Arco 1845, p. 300-309. Lucrezia Borgia's trousseau, which contained many black garments, was published by: Beltrami 1903.

century.[46] Secondly, Jack Greenstein with good reason wondered how a Venetian manual, written several decades earlier, could be related to a Florentine portrait painted in 1503.[47] Moreover, the Spanish craze for black, which influenced court fashion in Northern Italy, had not yet reached Florence at that time. Florentine women still preferred the lighter and more cheerful colours that were already in use in the fifteenth century.[48]

Early sixteenth-century trousseaux convincingly demonstrate the Florentine preference for coloured dress. The trousseau of Cornelia di Bartolommeo Buondelmonti, who married Leonardo di Lorenzo Morelli in 1507, is a case in point. Cornelia received a white satin *veste* (overgown) lined with marten, a purple *veste* lined with fur, a *cotta* of white damask with red velvet sleeves, a green *gamurra* with deep blue (*alessandrino*) sleeves and a second pair of green sleeves, a pink *gamurra* with sleeves of grey damask, a short purple *gamurra* with a velvet border and a *cioppa* of auburn wool decorated with red velvet. The unappraised items further included a gamurra of blue *saia* and a short green gamurra.[49] Another example is the trousseau of Catherina di Filippo Strozzi (app. 3D). She married Gino di Neri Capponi in 1504, a year after Leonardo started working on the *Mona Lisa*. At that time, Catherina owned a *roba* of auburn velvet lined with marten and three *cotte*, one of gold coloured satin with deep blue velvet, one of white damask with red satin, and the third of pale blue camlet with auburn satin. She also had three *cioppe*, respectively made of red, grey and multi-coloured woollen cloth, a *gamurra* of purple wool decorated with silver and green satin and a second one of multi-coloured cloth with sleeves of deep-blue satin.[50] A third and somewhat later trousseau, made up for the marriage of Ghostanza Minerbetti in 1511, conveys the same image. Ghostanza received a pink overgown edged with grey velvet, a dress of blue moiré silk edged with red velvet, a lemon-coloured dress edged with black velvet, a dress of white silk with edging and sleeves of auburn silk damask and a dress of green cloth with sleeves, borders and trim of auburn damask. She also had two pairs of sleeves, one pair of purple silk and one of red velvet.[51]

The inventories of bridal trousseaux not only show a predilection for colour, but also reveal a partiality for combining contrasting bright colours, like red and white or yellow and blue. Raphael's Florentine portraits of women, such as *Maddalena Doni* and the *Lady with a Unicorn*, beautifully illustrate this fashion (figs. 108-109).[52] The portraits of Maddalena Strozzi and her husband Agnolo Doni were probably painted on the occasion of their marriage in 1504.[53] Maddelena wears a dress of red moiré silk, trimmed with black fabric, with sleeves of

---

[46] Zöllner may have been thinking of the sumptuary law of 1464, which allowed women to wear certain pieces of jewellery for a period of three years after marriage. For this law, see: Mazzi 1908, p. 44, no. 3.
[47] Greenstein 2004, p. 30-31. Italian historian of dress Levi Pisetzky stated that black veils were worn in Venice, whereas Florentine women preferred white. Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, p. 89, 94. Although Zöllner refers to this study, he does not draw conclusions from it.
[48] Already stated by: Levi Pisetzky 1964-69, vol. 3, p. 57-59.
[49] Cornelia Buondelmonte's trousseau is published in: Morelli 1897, p. 14-16.
[50] The only trace of Spanish fashion present in this trousseau is a purple *bernia*, a cloak of Spanish origin (app. 3D, no. 12), but even this garment is not black.
[51] Ghostanza Minerbetti's trousseau is published in: Frick 2002, p. 233-237, for the appraised dresses, see p. 233.
[52] Raphael's two other female portraits painted in his Florentine period (1504-1508), *La Muta* (Urbino, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche) and *La Gravida* (Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 229), are fine examples as well. On dress in Raphael's Florentine portraits, especially *La Muta*, see: Baldi 1983, p. 238-239. A further example of the same fashion depicted by another painter is the portrait of an unknown woman by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 224).
[53] Both portraits are now in the Galleria Palatina in Florence. The attribution to Raphael is based on Vasari and has never been doubted. There is, however, some discussion on the date of the commission. Since the two portraits were originally joined, it seems likely they were painted for the couple's marriage,

bright blue damask. The white linen of her shirt is pulled through the apertures between the bodice and the sleeves. A transparent veil partially covers her otherwise bare shoulders. She also wears a conspicuous pendant attached to black cord and a gold chain around her waist.

Raphael's *Lady with a Unicorn* is dated slightly later, to c. 1505-1506. Even though the portrait has been repainted several times and was restored heavily in the early twentieth century, it still provides an accurate image of Florentine dress at the start of the sixteenth century.[54] The anonymous sitter wears a soft green dress edged with broad bands of auburn material. The dress has a low neckline that nearly plunges off the shoulder. Wide, red sleeves are loosely attached to the bodice with short ribbons, revealing the white linen of the *camicia* underneath. The lady wears a golden chain around her neck with a large pendant consisting of an emerald, a large square ruby and a pear-shaped pearl. The other jewellery consists of a golden ornament worn in her hair and a golden belt accentuating the waist. Both portraits reflect the use of contrasting colours that can be traced in inventories.

Roberta Orsi Landini, who did extensive research on the archive of the Medici wardrobe, has shown that the Florentine style, characterized by the use of bright colours, persisted well into the sixteenth century. When Eleanor of Toledo married the Florentine duke Cosimo I de' Medici in 1539, she adopted the Florentine custom of wearing coloured dress instead of black, the predominant colour in her native Naples. Similarly, her daughter-in-law Giovanna of Austria favoured bright colours only after her marriage to Francesco I in 1565. The colourful silk fabrics required for these garments were all produced in Florence. By wearing these locally produced fabrics, the court visually supported an industry that was vital to the Florentine economy.[55]

It is highly unlikely that Francesco del Giocondo would have chosen Spanish black dress for his wife, because it was not fashionable in Florence at that time. Moreover, as a Florentine silk merchant, he would most likely have favoured the local coloured silk fabrics. Instead of Spanish black fashion, Lisa Gherardini seems to be wearing colourful Florentine dress, which is confirmed by the results of the technical analysis of the pigments. This subject will be further elaborated on below.

2.3. New mother in maternity dress

In 2004 an international team of scholars and scientists conducted extensive technical research on *Mona Lisa*, the results of which were published two years later. For the first time, they drew attention to the ample, pleated overgown made of transparent material worn by Lisa Gherardini. Although discernible to the naked eye, the gauze dress is only fully visible in an infrared reflectogram. Imaging shows clearly that Lisa Gherardini is depicted wearing a tight-fitting bodice, decorated with the familiar motif of the *nodi vinciani* and edged with a braid border, to which a pleated gauze overgarment has been attached. Their main contribution to the debate on the sitter's attire, as formulated by Bruno Mottin, however, without proper evidence, is the suggestion that this is maternity dress.

---

although some scholars have suggested they were meant to celebrate the birth of their first child, a daughter in 1507, or their second child, a son in 1508. See: Florence 2008, p. 192, cat 44.

[54] At an unknown date, maybe already in the sixteenth century, the portrait was changed into a Saint Catherine of the Wheel, wearing a cloak to conceal the original dress. This layer was removed at the start of the twentieth century. For a comprehensive overview of the painting's history, including multiple restorations and technical research, see Tullia Carratù in: Paris 2001, p. 114-121, cat. 9.

[55] The change from black and other dark colours to a brighter and more colourful palette can be traced in the *Guardaroba Medicea* and in portraiture. Orsi Landini 2010, p. 193-197.

Mottin compared the overgarment to the one shown in Botticelli's *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli* (fig. 43). Over a deep pinkish red undergown Botticelli's sitter wears a similar gauze dress gathered at the neckline and decorated with gold braid at the neckline, sleeve edges and along the mid front opening of the garment. The upper part is worn closed, but from the waist down it is left open, just revealing the skirt of the underdress. According to Mottin, she is obviously pregnant and wearing a *guarnello*, a garment that he describes as indoor dress for young children and pregnant women. Although there are no indications that Lisa Gherardini was expecting when she was portrayed, Mottin pointed out she gave birth to Andrea in December 1502 and suggests she is wearing a *guarnello* to celebrate this occasion.[56]

Although Mottin should be given credit for being the first to include the sitter's transparent overgown in the analysis of her attire, his interpretation of the garment is inaccurate. He based it on dress historian Jacqueline Herald's description of the aforementioned portrait by Botticelli. Herald, however, only cautiously stated that 'Smeralda Bandinelli […] wears what may be termed a *guarnello*'. She tentatively suggested that it was 'possibly worn by pregnant women', but also mentioned that *guarnelli* are listed in inventories as male clothing as well, a fact that Mottin completely ignored.[57]

There are no sources to confirm that *guarnelli* were worn as maternity dress. However, *ricordanze* do list other types of dress typically worn by women just before or just after giving birth. Two garments appear regularly throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the *guardacuore da parto* (maternity shirt) and the *mantello da parto* (maternity mantle). *Guardacuori* were often colourful and fancifully decorated with buttons and linings. *Mantelli da parto*, meant to keep a new mother warm while she recovered from giving birth, were very diverse, ranging from rather basic examples to luxurious showpieces lined with fur and decorated with pearls. The Florentine painter Bartolomeo di Fruosino depicted the latter garment on a birth tray (fig. 110). A mother who has given birth receives her guests seated upright in bed, wearing a red *mantello da parto* closed with a pearl brooch at the chest.[58]

The dress shown in the portrait of Mona Lisa is clearly not maternity wear, a fact that Mottin himself now apparently acknowledges. In 2014 he republished the results of the examination carried out ten years earlier in summarized form. He repeated the suggestion that Lisa's dress is a *guarnello*, but no longer considered it to be maternity wear, citing Jacqueline Herald's description of the garment's use in full this time. He interpreted it as a simple gown, suitable for the domestic environment, which would then confirm Zöllner's hypothesis that Francesco del Giocondo commissioned the portrait to either celebrate the purchase of a new house or the birth of the couple's son Andrea.[59]

However, Lisa's dress cannot even be regarded as a *guarnello*. Herald described *guarnelli* as simple, loose dresses, made of linen or cotton.[60] The simplicity of the garment was also stressed by Polidori Calamandrei, who defined it as a very cheap and modest dress made of a

---

[56] Mottin 2006, p. 70.
[57] Herald 1981, p. 220. Herald's book offers a general introduction to fifteenth-century dress in Italy as a whole. For the definition of a Florentine garment such as the *guarnello*, one is advised to turn to the standard work on Florentine women's dress in this period: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 53. A more recent study that also provides an accurate definition of the *guarnello* is: Frick 2002, p. 310.
[58] For a more extensive discussion of maternity dress in *ricordanze*, see: Musacchio 1999, p. 38. On the guardacuoure, see also: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 102. For the birth tray, see Jacqueline Musacchio in: New York 2008, p. 152-154, cat. 69.
[59] Mottin 2014, p. 208-210.
[60] Herald 1981, p. 220.

coarse linen and cotton mixture, often without sleeves, worn by country women and servants.[61] Mottin's own description of Lisa's garment as being made of raw silk provided by Francesco's own shop is obviously at odds with the appearance of a *guarnello*.[62] The dress depicted in Botticelli's portrait stands out for its delicate fabric, probably made of silk, and luxurious gold edging and is therefore certainly not a *guarnello*. Nor is Lisa Gherardini's fine gauze dress.

2.4. Venetian courtesan with a yellow shawl

The most recent hypothesis on Mona Lisa's dress was put forward in 2009 by the late Elfriede Knauer, an archaeologist and ancient historian, whose special interest in costume history did not compensate for her lack of knowledge of the field.[63] Notwithstanding the discovery of the Heidelberg codex with the reference to Leonardo's portrait of Lisa del Giocondo, Knauer refused to go along with this identification of the sitter and dated the portrait earlier than most art historians did, to the months Leonardo spent in Venice in 1500. Comparing *Mona Lisa* with other Florentine portraits of women, especially Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of a Woman* in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute and Leonardo's own *Ginevra de' Benci* (figs. 49, 1), she argued that the sitter's attire does not correspond to Florentine customs. Mona Lisa's long, free-flowing hair and the absence of a kerchief covering the neck and shoulders would have been regarded as offensive in Florence. She believed that the sitter is dressed as a Venetian prostitute, an interpretation that she based on her new reading of the title *Gioconda* as 'girl of pleasure' or prostitute, and on the colours of the sitter's dress, in particular her alleged yellow shawl.[64]

The result of the technical research published in 2006 was Knauer's point of departure for the description of the sitter's dress, although she must have misread at least some of the conclusions. According to Knauer, the dress shown in *Mona Lisa* was originally red. The scientists never mentioned that possibility, but instead literally stated that 'greenish-brown seems more probable'.[65] Knauer furthermore disagrees with Mottin's conclusion that the sitter is depicted wearing a transparent overgown. She believes he mistook the white highlights on the gathered 'red' velvet at the neckline for a gauze *guarnello*, and a yellow shawl, draped across the left shoulder, for its rolled up sleeve.[66]

Knauer devoted a large part of her article to the connotations of yellow and the yellow shawl in particular. In Venice, prostitutes were obliged to wear a yellow shawl and Knauer tried hard to trace a pictorial tradition of portraits of courtesans wearing such a shawl, one of her ill-chosen examples being the *Portrait of a Lady* by Jacometto Veneziano in the Philadelphia

---

[61] Unlike *gamurre* and *cotte, guarnelli* are sometimes not even listed individually in inventories but are grouped together and listed under the linens along with shirts and aprons. An example is the 1417 inventory of Lorenzo di Giovanni di Duccio, which registers nine *guarnelli* without further specification. See: Polidori Calamandrei 1924, p. 53.

[62] Mottin 2006, p. 68. Although is it seems likely that Leonardo depicted a sheer silk fabric, it is probably not raw silk, which has a more irregular appearance because the gummy substance that covers the natural fibre has not been removed.

[63] On Knauer's interest in the history of dress, which arose after she had briefly worked at a tailor's shop in Paris early in her career, see: Ridgway 2011, p. 330. Ridgway suggested that Knauer's experience in dressmaking provided her with 'an acute understanding […] of the history of costume'. However, technical ability alone does not lead to historical and theoretical understanding. This pursuit fell outside Knauer's expertise, which did not include knowledge of dress history literature and methodology.

[64] Knauer 2009, p. 36-38, 46-55.

[65] For the technical research on the original colour of Mona Lisa's dress, see: Martin 2006, p. 64. X-ray fluorescence has revealed the presence of iron and copper, probably copper-acetate, as the main pigments for the dress. See: Laval, Pagès-Camagna and Walter 2006, p. 89.

[66] Knauer 2009, p. 44-45, 55

Museum (fig. 111).[67] Incidentally, she cites many more examples, interpreting a wide range of portraits of women as depictions of courtesans or mistresses, including examples that are not Venetian, such as Raphael's *Donna Velata* (fig. 112).[68] It is striking to see how Knauer interprets every shawl or veil that is yellow or even off-white, whatever its origin and appearance, as the sign of a courtesan. Even the veil worn by Cecilia Gallerani in her portrait by Leonardo is regarded as such (fig. 3).[69] Finally, she concludes that the sitter of *Mona Lisa*, wearing the yellow shawl on her left shoulder and dressed in red as a sign of lust, 'was meant to be seen as the supreme and therefore nameless member of that age-old sisterhood'.[70]

Besides the fact that Knauer too readily pronounces yellow shawls to be the insignia of a courtesan in a multitude of portraits of women, she obviously made a number of unjustified assumptions regarding the colour of Mona Lisa's dress and the absence of the gauze overdress. Moreover, Knauer's comparison of the portrait to Leonardo's *Ginevra* and Ghirlandaio's likeness of an anonymous woman is misleading, since both were painted decades before Leonardo started working on *Mona Lisa*. Fashion had, of course, changed during those years. Closer examination of the infrared reflectogram and the X-ray image shows that the first outline of Mona Lisa's dress has more in common with Florentine fashion than can be made out by simply looking at the painting with the naked eye.

3.1. A reconstruction of the painting process of Mona Lisa's dress

In 1973 Kenneth Clark was the first and remains the only art historian to suggest that Mona Lisa's dress as it appears in the final painting was not planned as such from the start on. He suggested that Leonardo first drew a now lost cartoon, which was copied by Raphael. This drawing, now in the Louvre, shows a woman on a balcony in the same pose as Lisa Gherardini, flanked by two columns (fig. 113). She is not dressed in a transparent draped overgown, like Lisa, but is depicted wearing contemporary Florentine fashion, consisting of a dress with a fitted bodice, ample sleeves and a low neckline, revealing a large part of her pleated chemise. Clark considered this attire to be a faithful copy of the first stage of the dress as it appeared in the cartoon of *Mona Lisa*. He thus hypothesized that Leonardo had portrayed his sitter in early sixteenth-century Florentine fashion and only added the transparent drapery and what he considered to be a widow's veil after leaving Florence to give the portrait a more timeless appeal.[71]

Clark's suggestion found no following and today Raphael's drawing is generally regarded as a free interpretation rather than a truthful copy of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*.[72] But even

---

[67] David Alan Brown noted earlier that Veneziano had portrayed another sitter with the same coif, in white instead of yellow (*Portrait of Lady*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 1975.1.85). See: Washington 2001, p. 154-157, cat 19 and p. 160-161, cat. 21. In 1543, this woman was identified by Marcantonio Michiel as a nun of the monastery of San Secondo, quite the opposite of a courtesan. For this identification, see Andrea Bayer in: Berlin / New York 2011, p. 346-348, cat. 152b.

[68] According to Knauer, there is no evidence that the veil worn by *La Velata* is typical of Rome. However, the veil can be identified as a *lenzuolo*, a type of mantle worn only in Rome and its immediate environs. In fact, fifteenth-century Roman sumptuary laws forbade courtesans to wear a *lenzuolo*. See: Van Dijk 2008, p. 5-11.

[69] Knauer 2009, p. 7-28, 35.

[70] Knauer 2009, p. 59.

[71] Clark 1973, p. 146-147.

[72] Clark's view was strongly opposed by David Alan Brown, who rejected the idea that the portrait evolved gradually. Brown 1983, p. 103-104. For Raphael's drawing, see especially Françoise Viatte in: Paris 2003, p. 190-192, cat. 62. Lucco connected the Louvre drawing to a newly discovered portrait of Costanza Fregosa – a lady from Genoa who stayed at the court of Urbino – that he attributed to Raphael.

if there is no direct relationship between this drawing and *Mona Lisa*, Clark's hypothesis in fact stands up to scrutiny. All previously discussed scholars supposed a direct relationship between the sitter's actual garments worn at the time of painting and the attire in the final portrait. Ever since Pope-Hennessy's seminal study on Renaissance portraiture art historians have been well aware of the constructed nature of a portrait. Pope-Hennessy described *Mona Lisa* as 'a highly artificial structure', a composition that has been well thought out and carefully planned.[73] Yet when it comes to dress, most scholars tend to think that Leonardo simply depicted what he saw in front of him: a mourning woman, a Florentine matron wearing Spanish fashion, a mother in maternity dress or even a Venetian prostitute. We may assume, however, that Lisa's dress as it appears in the finished portrait is just as carefully staged as all other elements of the composition. Since Leonardo never parted with the portrait, reworking it over time, it appears there was a long process of alteration.

Modern technology and the recent discovery of a workshop copy of *Mona Lisa* in Madrid now enable us to confirm the two main points of Clark's hypothesis: Lisa Gherardini was originally wearing Florentine fashion and the overgarment was added at a later stage. To understand the layers of Mona Lisa's dress it is crucial to study the infrared reflectograms made first in 2004 and then with a better camera in 2008 (fig. 114).[74] These images not only give a much clearer picture of the sitter's transparent overgown, especially on the right of the sitter's left arm, but also of the dress worn beneath, including some lines of the underdrawing. Further helpful information is provided by the workshop copy of *Mona Lisa*, now in the Prado in Madrid, which was cleaned and restored in 2011 (fig. 115). For a long time this version was regarded as one of the many later copies of the *Mona Lisa*. However, recent technical examination and the subsequent restoration have convincingly proven that this portrait was produced in Leonardo's workshop by an assistant working alongside the master during the period when the latter made significant alterations, only visible in the underdrawing.[75]

Ana Gonzáles Mozo, who conducted the technical examination, assumed the workshop copy was begun very shortly after Leonardo started working on the original, because the infrared reflectogram of the copy shows largely the same underdrawing as the original (figs. 114, 116). Details that are clearly visible in the underdrawing but have disappeared in the final version, such as the clearly defined waistline, show that the copyist must have seen the original *Mona Lisa* at an early stage and closely followed Leonardo's working process.[76] Bruno Mottin, on the other hand, proposed a later date for the copy, since the copyist left out some of the

---

Although this portrait differs from the drawing in composition, Lucco judged the dress of the sitter to be similar. He stated that the *lenza* worn around the head was an accessory unknown in Florence, thereby ruling out that the sitter of the drawing is Florentine. See: Lucco 2000, p. 57-58, 69. However, by the early sixteenth-century the *lenza* appears in other Florentine female portraits, for instance in Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of a Lady* (Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 224).

[73] To exemplify his statement, Pope-Hennessy mentions the placement of the sitter between the parallel lines of the armchair and the parapet, the different light source in the area of the sitter and background and the use of a mountain landscape as background. See: Pope-Hennessy 1966, p. 106-108.

[74] For technical details on the infrared reflectogram, see: Lambert 2006, p. 78. After the first reflectogram, a second one was made in 2008 with a better camera. Published for the first time in: Mottin 2014, p. 207.

[75] Both Francesco Melzi and Salaì have been mentioned as the possible copyist, but the style and working method led Mottin to tentatively attribute the copy to Salaì, ruling out an attribution to Melzi. He suggested this workshop copy could then be the painting mentioned in Salaì's inventory (see note 19 above). Mottin 2014, p. 215-220.

[76] Anna Gonzáles Mozo in: Paris 2012, p. 234-235; González Mozo 2014, p. 197-201. González Mozo also suggested that, since the figures have the same size, the copyist may have used the same cartoon, although there are also lines that were clearly drawn freehand. However, as indicated by Mottin, there are many slight differences between the underdrawings that rule out this possibility. Mottin 2014, p. 214.

important pentimenti that are visible in the infrared reflectogram of the original, notably an alteration in the positioning of the left hand.[77] Both agree that the copy reflects an earlier stage of the Louvre *Mona Lisa*, before the latter's completion. This becomes apparent in the mountain landscape. A detail in the workshop copy on the right of the sitter's neck shows a distinct mountain group with two rocks leaning to the right, which is related to one of Leonardo's studies of mountains made between 1508 and 1511 (fig. 117).[78] This rock formation is not visible in the Louvre *Mona Lisa* with the naked eye, but according to Gonzáles Mozo it is recognizable in the infrared reflectogram of the panel, though difficult to make out. Mottin refers to an x-ray emissiography image of Mona Lisa, revealing the same rocks more clearly.[79] It is clear that, although of far lesser quality than the original *Mona Lisa*, the workshop copy is a highly valuable source for Leonardo's workshop practice, not least because of its excellent state of conservation.

The infrared reflectogram of *Mona Lisa* beautifully shows the outlines of the dress worn under the layers of transparent material (figs. 114). Lisa is depicted wearing a dress with a fitted bodice and a clearly defined waistline. From the waist up to the breast, several parallel, horizontal lines can be seen, which Mottin interpreted as a broad belt.[80] However, belts of this size are never encountered in portraits of this time. Moreover, it raises the question why Leonardo would have used multiple lines to indicate one accessory. I interpret these lines as indications of folds. The fabric of a tightly fitted bodice will wrinkle at the slightest movement of the wearer. Leonardo, a keen observer of both movement and folds, would certainly have noted them. Raphael depicted similar horizontal folds at waist level on his portrait of Maddalena Doni and the *Lady with a Unicorn* (figs. 108-109).

Lisa's first layer of clothing is also partly visible in the infrared reflectogram (fig. 114). At the left shoulder a light area stands out. This is a white *camicia* that has been pulled out between bodice and sleeve. This detail can still be observed with the naked eye, although the shirt now appears yellow rather than white (fig. 6). The workshop copy, however, gives an impression of the original effect (fig. 115). In the infrared reflectograpm of the Louvre *Mona Lisa* a darker, narrow band along the neckline of the dress is visible (fig. 114). This appears to be the *camicia* as well, appearing at the cleavage.[81] It is not visible in the original *Mona Lisa* (fig. 6), but the workshop copy shows the scalloped edge of a shirt peeking out of the dress at the cleavage (fig. 115).

The infrared reflectogram of the original *Mona Lisa* further shows two curved lines of the underdrawing painted with a thick brush on the front of the bodice running from cleavage to waistline (fig. 114). Mottin interpreted these lines as bust darts, shaping the bodice. He also noticed a slight irregularity in the embroidery pattern along the neckline. The pattern, Leonardo's well-known *nodi vinciani*, consists of a regular alternating pattern of two loops and a larger cross. However, at the centre front of the dress, in between the two lines of the underdrawing, there are three loops instead of two (fig. 118). Mottin explains this by suggesting the bodice was made of pre-embroidered fabric, the pattern of which was interrupted by the

---

[77] Mottin interpreted the grey area at the neckline as a line of the underdrawing indicating the edge of the *camicia*, that was wiped out at a later stage. Mottin 2014, p. 214-215. It is difficult to make out whether this is indeed a blurred part of the underdrawing or a pentimento in oil paint.
[78] On the date of the drawing, that is usually connected to Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* in the Louvre (fig. 14), see Vincent Delieuvin in: Paris 2012, p. 160-161, cat 49.
[79] González Mozo 2014, p. 200; Mottin 2014, p. 214 and p. 215, fig. 13 (X-ray emissiograph).
[80] Mottin 2006, p. 70. I thank Vincent Delieuvin (Musée du Louvre, Paris) and Margreet Wolters (RKD, The Hague) for discussing the infrared reflectogram of *Mona Lisa* with me.
[81] Mottin 2014, p. 214.

two bust darts.[82] The use of ready embroidered fabrics, however, is improbable and the addition of the *nodi vinciani* motif is more likely to have been an invention of Leonardo's rather than a pattern actually worn by Lisa Gherardini. As Mottin noted himself, it is a recurring motif in his work.[83] Moreover, the location of the two drawn lines is illogical for bust darts, which are normally positioned more to the sides. What, then, is the purpose of these two lines? Because of their position at the centre front, I would suggest that they indicate the two pieces of the bodice that were laced up, similar to the way Ginevra de' Benci's bodice is fastened (fig. 1).

Comparing Lisa's dress as revealed in the infrared reflectogram to contemporary portraits, it becomes clear that she was indeed originally wearing the local fashion of her day. Maddalena Doni was portrayed by Raphael wearing a strikingly similar dress with a fitted bodice and detachable sleeves (fig. 108). Her *camicia* too pops out at the shoulder and appears at the neckline of her dress in the same way as Lisa's. The front of her bodice is also laced up and the dark edging of the two bodice pieces corresponds exactly with the lines of the underdrawing seen in Lisa's bodice. As discussed above, the bright colours of Mona Lisa's attire, a green dress with vivid yellow sleeves, are also hallmarks of Florentine fashion. The workshop copy in the Prado gives an idea of the original green colour of the dress, albeit with red sleeves. Red was also a fashionable colour at the time. In his first outline of the portrait, Leonardo clearly depicted contemporary Florentine fashion as probably worn by his sitter, Lisa Gherardini.

A comparison of Raphael's drawing in the Louvre to the first phase of the depiction of dress in *Mona Lisa* shows some similarities (figs. 113-114). The cut of the two dresses is the same and Raphael has indicated the same vertical lines on the bodice as Leonardo did. However, these parallels stem from the similar Florentine fashion worn by two different sitters; Raphael certainly did not copy Lisa Gherardini's dress faithfully. The sleeves of his sitter are much larger and her chemise rises up to her collarbone, whereas Lisa's cleavage is uncovered. Although Clark was right to suppose Leonardo first portrayed Lisa Gherardini in contemporary dress, his suggestion that Raphael's drawing is a copy of the original cartoon is implausible.

Two clues suggest that dress was not Leonardo's primary concern when he began working on a new painting. As discussed in the previous chapter with regard to the cartoon for a portrait of Isabella d'Este, when preparing a drawing for transfer Leonardo would prick the outlines of a figure's face and hands very carefully. He was less concerned with dress and drapery, which were pricked roughly.[84] In the case of *Mona Lisa* this is confirmed by Agostino Vespucci's margin note, commenting on Cicero's statement that Apelles finished the head and hands of his Venus most beautifully. Vespucci informs us that Leonardo worked in the same manner, as for instance in 'the head of Lisa del Giocondo and of Anne, mother of the Virgin'.[85] Probably, the dress in the underdrawing was casually sketched based on drawings from life, which faithfully recorded the features of Florentine fashion. Only at a later stage would Leonardo devote more attention to the depiction of dress and drapery in *Mona Lisa*.

Clark's suggestion that the transparent overdress was added in a later phase is confirmed by the infrared reflectogram. The band of embroidery running along the neckline of Lisa's dress continues even in those parts where it is covered by the drapery worn on top (fig.

---

[82] Mottin 2006, p. 70.

[83] The *nodi vinciani* motif appears in a similar way as a decorative border along the neckline of a garment in the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani (fig. 3) and the second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* in Mary's cloak (fig. 13). On the motif, see: chapter 3, p. 81-83.

[84] Bambach 1999, p. 111-112. See also chapter 4, p. 112.

[85] See notes 9-10 above.

114).[86] The conclusion that the addition of the overgarment was not planned from the start has never been drawn before. As discussed in chapter 3, Leonardo worked in a similar way on the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani. He first painted the entire decorative border of Cecilia's neckline, only to cover it with a blue *sbernia* in a later phase (fig. 3).[87] In the case of *Mona Lisa* too, Leonardo added the draperies at a later stage, at which point he probably also decided to remove the lace fastening at the centre front of the bodice, causing the irregularity of the embroidered *nodi vinciani* pattern. Significantly, the infrared reflectogram of the workshop copy does not show this discontinuity, nor does the pattern continue under the draperies at the left shoulder (fig. 116).[88] Although Leonardo's assistant did add the vertical lines of the bodice fastening, he only drew the *nodi vinciani* pattern when the decision was already made to remove the fastening and to add the draperies. It also explains the fact that the embroidery appears to be underneath the transparent overgown in the original *Mona Lisa*, whereas it lies clearly on top of it in the workshop copy.

When did Leonardo decide to add the draped overgarment? Clark assumed it was done in Milan, where Leonardo settled in 1508 after travelling back and forth from Florence between 1506 and 1508. He suggested that the absence of the sitter would have inspired Leonardo to start idealizing both the facial features and the dress.[89] This date for the addition of the overgarment is in fact confirmed by the date that Mottin proposed for the workshop copy. As noted above, he pointed out that the absence of the pentimento in the position of the left hand indicates that work had already been underway for some time when the copyist started. Mottin argued the copy must date to Leonardo's second Milanese sojourn, because its walnut support is typically Milanese. The original version of *Mona Lisa* is painted on poplar panel, whereas Leonardo used walnut support for all his Milanese portraits: the *Portrait of a Musician*, *The Lady with an Ermine* and *La Belle Ferronnière* (figs. 7, 3-4). In Florence, however, walnut was hardly used, either by Leonardo or his contemporaries. It was a common support in Milan, often used by Leonardo and his circle for paintings of smaller dimensions.[90] Mottin thus dates the workshop copy to c. 1506-1512, i.e. from the moment Leonardo began travelling to Milan on a regular basis until the end of his second Milanese sojourn.

There is one more painting that may provide further insight into Leonardo's thought process with regard to dress in *Mona Lisa*. Shortly before he received the latter portrait commission, he started work on *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, now in the Louvre (fig. 14). The detail of interest here is the sleeve of the Virgin, which is transparent. The recent restoration of the painting in 2012 yielded new insights that allowed Vincent Delieuvin to present a detailed analysis of the various stages of the genesis of the painting. He used elaborate and varied evidence, such as a surviving cartoon, preparatory drawings, the underdrawing as revealed by infrared reflectography and a large number of workshop copies after different stages

---

[86] As noted by: Mottin 2006, p. 66, figs. 108-109.
[87] See chapter 3, p. 91.
[88] Mottin argued that the different appearance of the embroidery pattern in the workshop copy is an indication that the copyist set out to work independently of Leonardo. See: Mottin 2014, p. 214. However, Mottin ignored the fact that the pattern does not continue under the drapery of the shoulder, which shows that the copyist was anticipating Leonardo's changes rather than working independently.
[89] Clark 1973, p. 146-147. Clark believed that Leonardo only transferred his cartoon to panel in Milan. However, if Leonardo used a cartoon, it seems more likely that he had already transferred the design to panel in Florence. The underdrawing clearly reveals the typical features of Florentine fashion, including details such as the fastening of the bodice that were painted freehand.
[90] While in Milan, Leonardo executed only very large paintings on poplar panel, like the *Virgin of the Rocks*. Mottin 2014, p. 213-214.

of the composition. This allowed him to distinguish three major phases, each with a different cartoon.[91] None of the copies after the first and second stage of the composition shows Mary's transparent sleeve. Only in the latest phase, after his move to Milan in the summer of 1508, did Leonardo start (as Delieuvin put it) updating different elements, notably the drapery and coiffures of the figures. These changes were preceded by a number of detailed drawings, dated between 1507 and 1510, in which the new forms took shape. A study for Mary's right arm, now in the Royal Collection, shows the meticulous attention Leonardo devoted to the circular pleats of the light, transparent fabric of her sleeve (fig. 119).[92]

Could it be that Leonardo, who was working simultaneously on *Mona Lisa* and *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, developed similar ideas on the depiction of transparent drapery for both paintings at the same time?[93] Taking a closer look at his writings on drapery from the *Treatise on Painting* that Pedretti dated to this period confirms Leonardo's preoccupation with the depiction of various sorts of textiles and pleats. As discussed in chapter 3, this was already apparent in his writings dated to the 1490s, but he elaborated further on the subject between 1505 and 1515. In the 1490s Leonardo pointed out that the painter should draw fabrics from nature and be aware of the different folds of each type of textile caused by the movement of a body underneath. In the early sixteenth century he expanded on his advice and started to encourage the depiction of a greater diversity of draperies, stating for instance (app. 1, no. 18):

> Above all, diversify the draperies in narrative paintings; in some make the folds with smooth breaks, and do this with thick fabrics, and some should have soft folds with sides that are not angular but curved. This happens in the case of silk and satin and other thin fabrics, such as linen, veiling and the like. Also, make draperies with few but large folds in thick fabrics, such as are seen in felt, when used in capes and bed coverings.

In another passage he wrote (app. 1, no. 9):

> The draperies with which figures are clothed are of three sorts, that is, thin, thick and medium. Thin ones are lightest and liveliest in motion. […] Medium draperies show less motion and thick ones almost none, unless a wind contrary to the motion of the figure aids them to move. The upper or lower ends of draperies follow the bending of the figure; toward the feet they are disposed according to whether the leg is straight, bending, twisting or striking against them. They must approach or withdraw from the joints, in accordance with whether the figure is walking, running or jumping, or move without other motion of the figure when the wind itself strikes them. And the folds should be modified in accordance with the kinds of draperies, and whether these are transparent or opaque.

The contrast between transparent and opaque as well as the variation of thin, medium and thick drapery are new themes in Leonardo's writings in this period.

It is significant that Leonardo distinguishes between transparent and opaque draperies at the end of this passage. As Pedretti has pointed out, Melzi may have based this part of the

---

[91] On the different phases of execution, see the chapter 'L'exploration du sujet, du carton de Londres au tableau du Louvre' in: Paris 2012, p. 46-116.

[92] Paris 2012, p. 131-143. For the study of the Virgin's arm, see in particular: p. 142, cat. 42. Compare also Carmen Bambach, who dates the drawing slightly later, to c. 1508-1512, in: New York 2003, p. 561-562, cat. 106.

[93] Leonardo had already experimented with the depiction of a transparent garment somewhat earlier, in his first Milanese period. In the second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks* the angel wears a semi-transparent gauze dress (fig. 13). The rendering of the fabric is, however, less refined than in his later paintings.

treatise on a sheet containing anatomical studies and several notes on painting that were all crossed through (fig. 120). Dated to c. 1510, this is the only surviving original text on drapery by Leonardo written after 1500 and therefore a source of major interest.[94] The notes in the right column read from the top (app. 1, no. 14):

Variety in the histories. Thin cloths, thick, new and old ones, with broken or solid plaits; soft accents[?], dark areas[?] obscure and less obscure; with or without reflections; defined or confused, according to the distances and the various colours; and garments, according to the rank of those who are wearing them; long and short, fluttering or stiff, conforming to the movements, such as encircle the figures; such as twist and flutter with ends streaming upwards or downwards according to the folds; and such as cling close about the feet or separate from them, according as the legs are shown at rest or bending or turning or pressing together within; either fitting closely or separating from the joints, according to the step or movements, or the wind which is feigned; and that the plaits be accommodated to the quality of the cloths, whether transparent or opaque.

Leonardo's description comes close to the depiction of drapery in *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (fig. 14). The sleeves of Mary and Anne encircle their arms, the wind pushes Mary's fluttering dress upwards at the back whereas her heavier mantle reveals the movements of her legs and clings close to her feet. Leonardo indeed put into practice the contrasts he described between light and heavy, transparent and opaque.

Though the composition is static, similar contrasts can be seen in *Mona Lisa* too, and even better in the recently cleaned workshop copy than in the original (figs. 6, 115). Leonardo alternated the crisp pleats of the sleeves covering the right underarm with the soft and wavy folds of the gauze overgarment piling over, and the fine wrinkles at the neckline with the bold zigzag creases of sheer fabric falling over the left upper arm. He alternated thick and thin material, and played with opaqueness and transparency, leaving some areas in the dark and brightly illuminating others. In the original these effects are less obvious because of the layers of dirt and darkened varnish, but Leonardo's intention is still clear.

To summarize, in the first stage of *Mona Lisa*, painted in Florence, Leonardo represented Lisa Gherardini wearing the fashion that was popular in Florence at the time. As Agostino Vespucci's note to Cicero shows, the depiction of the garments was probably no more than a mere sketch at this stage. Leonardo, famous for being slow to finish a painting, seems to have abandoned the portrait at this stage only to return to it during his second stay in Milan, between 1508 and 1513. In this period, Leonardo developed a special interest in the depiction of transparent drapery (to which his writings and the changes in the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* attest), resulting in the addition of a sheer, draped overgarment. At the same time, one of his workshop members started working on the copy. This assistant copied the underdrawing, but took into account the major change of the additional garment and did not draw the part of the embroidery pattern that would remain hidden under the draperies. As González Mozo has shown, the workshop copy was finished by 1512, after which Leonardo continued working on the mountain landscape in the background of the original *Mona Lisa*. Her draped overgarment, however, remained as it appears now in the workshop version. This sets a clear date of c. 1508-1512 for the addition of Mona Lisa's overdress.

[94] Pedretti 1977, vol. 1, p. 287.

3.2 Pictorial sources for dress in *Mona Lisa*

As discussed above, Mona Lisa's dress conforms to Leonardo's advice on the depiction of drapery. In fact, the transparent overgarment has more in common with this views on ideal drapery than with contemporary fashion. It is impossible to relate it to any known early sixteenth-century garment. Therefore, it stands to reason, as I will argue here, that Leonardo invented this garment himself, drawing upon a range of motifs with which he had become familiar in his early Florentine years and at Verrocchio's workshop in particular.

Verrocchio's *Bust of a Lady with Flowers* has often been compared to Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* (figs. 39, 1). Both sitters are plainly dressed and wear similar neckerchiefs.[95] The comparison is, however, never extended to *Mona Lisa*, even though the latter's overdress corresponds more closely to the garment of Verrocchio's bust than to Ginevra's *gamurra*. Verrocchio's lady wears a fluttering dress with a gathered neckline that closely resembles that of *Mona Lisa*. The cut of the garment is very loose and the lady's waistline is only defined by the sash tied around it. Although the tight cut of the sleeves is different from the ample sleeves of *Mona Lisa*, they have in common that they seem to have been cut in one piece with the rest of the garment, since no seam is visible at the shoulder. This simple rectangular cut was common for shirts, or *camicie*.[96]

In her study on Renaissance theatre costume, Stella Mary Newton showed that *camicie* were regularly used on stage to clothe mythological figures such as nymphs and other characters from antiquity. The *camicia*, which could be draped and pleated, was reminiscent of classical dress. This practice was adopted in painting as well. For instance, Botticelli dressed his three Graces in *Primavera* in transparent garments that are clearly derived from contemporary *camicie* (fig. 121).[97] Verrocchio and Leonardo made use of a similar garments for their depiction of a sleeping Venus or nymph on a design for a tournament banner (fig. 122).[98] The recumbent female figure wears a chemise of rippling fabric with the characteristic gathered neckline. In the last three decades of the fifteenth century, this type of neckline with masses of wrinkled fabric dispersing into the dress is an often-seen feature in the dress of nymphs, Venus and other goddesses in painting. It does not appear in fashionable overgarments of the time, with perhaps the exception of Botticelli's portrait of a woman now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (fig. 43).[99]

---

[95] See for instance Eleonora Luciano in: Washington 2001, p. 162.

[96] On the cut of the *camicia*, see: Birbari 1975, p. 37-40.

[97] Newton 1975, p. 120-121. For the Botticelli example, see one of Newton's earlier articles, published under her maiden's name: Pearce 1959, p. 131. An interesting comparison is Emma Mellencamp's contribution on the shirt of Titian's *Flora* (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 no. 1492), which she also links to theatre practice. See: Mellencamp 1969, p. 174-177.

[98] It is not known for sure which tournament the design was made for, but the sketch is usually associated with the *giostra* of 1475 in honour of Simonetta Vespucci. The drawing is firmly attributed to Verrocchio and Leonardo on the grounds of style and technique. See: Brown 1994, p. 99-109.

[99] It is not known for sure exactly what type of garment Botticelli represented, although it is certainly not a *guarnello*. It has been suggested that the gown is similar to the 'cioppa di mostavoliere' in the trousseau of Nannina de' Medici, which was interpreted as a dress made of a 'very light veil' (app. 3C, no. 5). See: Orsi Landini and Westerman Bulgarella 2001, p. 91. However, *mostavoliere* was a grey woollen cloth named after the town in which it was produced, Montvilliers in France. See: Schweickard 2009, p. 342. It has not been noted before that the garment in the Victoria & Albert portrait shows a remarkable similarity to the dress in a group of idealized female portraits by Botticelli and his workshop, of which the portrait in Frankfurt is best known (Städel Museum, inv. no. 936). These sitters are dressed in a way that is usually described as 'all' antica'. See: Frankurt am Main 2009, p. 152-155, cat. 1. More work is still to be done on this subject and dress in Botticelli's portraits is a subject for further research in its own right.

The use of a transparent garment for Mona Lisa similar to the one worn by nymphs and goddesses on stage and in painting, calls to mind a remark made by Gian Paolo Lomazzo. He described *Mona Lisa* as 'in the guise of spring', a detail that is usually dismissed as a mistake because obvious allusions to spring, such as flowers, are lacking.[100] However, it is plausible that Lomazzo, or possibly his informant Melzi, was familiar with the origins of the garment, which was indeed used for personifications of Spring and Flora.

In his *Annunciation*, dateable between 1470 and 1478, Leonardo used a similar garment for the Virgin Mary (fig. 9).[101] She is dressed in a pinkish red gown with a gold neckband, to which the rich folds of her bodice are attached. Like the lady of Verrocchio's Bargello bust, she has a sash around her waist. As Anne Hollander noted, this is the first time that the Virgin is clothed this way in Florentine art. She described how the drapery accentuates Mary's bosom underneath, recalling classical Greek dress. Moreover, she noted the resemblance to Mona Lisa's dress, suggesting that 'Leonardo wished to clothe her smile with both ancient suggestions and an ambiguously virginal ambience'.[102] Before elaborating on the possible connotations of this dress in the final section of this chapter, other elements of Mona Lisa's attire will be analysed first.

On Mona Lisa's left shoulder lies a roll of fabric that has been variously interpreted as a rolled up sleeve or a scarf.[103] It is difficult to determine what it is precisely, although it is not likely to be a sleeve because the left arm is covered by the true sleeve. It is important to observe that the motif of a roll of twisted material on a figure's shoulder appeared earlier in both versions of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks*. In the first version, now in the Louvre, the angel in the right foreground wears a red mantle across his back, along the wing (fig. 12). One edge has been rolled up, revealing the green lining of the mantle, and draped over the left shoulder and underneath the left arm, creating a roll of fabric with a similar appearance as the one in *Mona Lisa*. In the second version of the altarpiece, now in the National Gallery in London, the angel's mantle has dropped and is draped along the bottom of the wings (fig. 13). The material on the angel's shoulder has not disappeared, however, but has been transformed into what seems to be a giant armhole of an overgown. This again shows Leonardo exploring the artistic potential of garments and drapery, creating visually appealing effects of wrinkled fabric in the process. The roll of fabric in Mona Lisa probably originated in the same way. Whether it is a scarf or something else is impossible to determine, but in fact this question is not of great interest since it is a drapery motif that Leonardo had employed more often in different ways rather than an actual garment or accessory.

A second motif that can be traced is the twisted point of the veil falling over the right shoulder. This detail is now hardly discernible in the original *Mona Lisa*, but can be studied very well in the workshop copy (fig. 115). The exact same twisted veil, falling across the right

[100] 'a guisa di primavera', Lomazzo 1973-75, vol. 2, p. 378. Regarded as a mistake for instance by: Greenstein 2004, p. 22.
[101] Opinions on the precise dating of the *Annunciation* vary. For an overview, see: Zöllner 2003, p. 216, no. V.
[102] Anne Hollander in: London 2002a, p. 24.
[103] Both Woods-Marsden and Mottin noted the difficulty of properly identifying this piece of fabric, because it is impossible to find comparable examples in portraiture. Woods-Marsden 2001, p. 87, note 10; Mottin 2006, p. 68.

shoulder of a female figure, appears in a drawing by Verrocchio of an idealized woman (fig. 123).[104] In his life of Verrocchio, Vasari related how Leonardo used to imitate these drawings:

> There are some drawings by his [Verrocchio's] hand in our book, made with much patience and very great judgment, among which are certain heads of women, beautiful in expression and in the adornment of the hair, which Leonardo da Vinci was ever imitating for their beauty.[105]

Notwithstanding Leonardo's own statement that 'it is an extreme defect when painters repeat the movements and the same faces and manners of drapery [as their master]', he quoted a specific drapery motif for *Mona Lisa* that was invented by Verrocchio.[106]

With regard to the depiction of the human body Michael Kwakkelstein has pointed out that Leonardo never emancipated himself from the pictorial language he became acquainted with in Verrocchio's workshop, adhering to the latter's forms and types, despite his own advice to work from nature instead of other masters.[107] To this can now be added that in the case of *Mona Lisa* the same applies to his treatment of drapery. Although Leonardo started out portraying garments that Lisa Gherardini could have worn, she never posed for him wearing a transparent gown as depicted in her portrait. Rather, the overgown and veil are composed of a mixture of pictorial sources, motifs that were partly derived from Verrocchio and partly from Leonardo's own earlier work.

3.3. Flowing tresses

A less conspicuous detail of her appearance, Mona Lisa's hairstyle has been studied less than her attire. Layers of darkened varnish and dirt have long discouraged and hampered a careful analysis. Several art historians have nevertheless devoted attention to it, one of them being Joanna Woods-Marsden, who thought the sitter was portrayed wearing her hair loose. This would have been highly unusual for the wife of a Florentine merchant. According to Woods-Marsden, loose hair was regarded as a sign of loose morals, even if covered with a veil. She argued that Leonardo put his own artistic and aesthetic considerations before the patron's demands, speculating this may have been a reason for Francesco del Giocondo to reject the portrait.[108] In the first infrared reflectogram of Mona Lisa made in 2004, however, Bruno Mottin noticed, for the first time, the presence of a small bonnet at the back of the sitter's head. He ascertained that the hair is gathered into a bun covered by the bonnet with some loose tresses on either side of the head. Comparing this hairstyle with fifteenth-century portraits, he concluded that it was rather common in Florence.[109]

---

[104] Particia Lee Rubin suggested Leonardo had probably used this drawing already as an example for his study of an idealized female head, now in the Uffizi, dated to c. 1468-1475 (fig. 125). London 1999, p. 194-197, cat. 31.

[105] 'Sono alcuni disegni di sua mano nel nostro libro fatti con molta pacienza e grandissimo giudizio; in fra i quali sono alcune teste di femina con bell'arie et acconciature di capegli, quali per la sua bellezza Lionardo da Vinci sempre imitò', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 3, p. 538. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 552.

[106] 'Sommo difetto è de' pittori replicare li medesimi moti e medesimi maniere di panni […]', CU fol. 44r. Translation: McMahon 1956, p. 55, no. 86. Compare also: Kwakkelstein 2011a, p. 108-111.

[107] Kwakkelstein 2011a, p. 134.

[108] Woods-Marsden compared the hairstyle of *Mona Lisa* to that of Isabella d'Este in Leonardo's cartoon, which she also described as loose. Isabella, however, wears her hair gathered in a light veil that is hardly visible any more, but can still be seen in the various copies made of the original cartoon. Besides the loose hair, Woods-Marsden also qualified the absence of jewellery and the colour scheme as unusual. Woods-Marsden 2001, p. 77-79.

[109] Mottin 2006, p. 68.

Although similar coiffures are indeed often found in Florentine portraits, two aspects of Mona Lisa's hairstyle are unusual. Firstly, the loose curly locks are much longer than in other portraits, such as Davide Ghirlandaio's two portraits now in Williamstown and New York, and Leonardo's own *Ginevra de' Benci* (figs. 49-50, 1). Secondly, by the time Lisa Gherardini was portrayed, in 1503, this hairstyle had already been abandoned in favour of one in which the hair was loosely gathered over the ears in a transparent veil, as can be seen in Raphael's portrait of Maddalena Doni and his *Lady with a Unicorn* (figs. 108-109). Woods-Marsden's suggestion that Leonardo preferred aesthetics over reality may not be far off the mark after all.

In his life of Leonardo, Vasari recalled that Leonardo was particularly fond of his pupil Salaì's curls: 'In Milan he took for his assistant the Milanese Salaì, who was most comely in grace and beauty, having fine locks, curling in ringlets, in which Leonardo greatly delighted.'[110] This interest in curling hair is reflected in many of Leonardo's notes and drawings. Martin Kemp connected a note on the similar movements of hair and water to Mona Lisa's cascades of curls. Next to a drawing of water streams resembling braids, Leonardo wrote (fig. 124):

> Observe the motion of the surface of the water which resembles that of hair, which has two motions, of which one depends on the weight of the hair, the other on the direction of the curls; thus the water forms eddying whirlpools, one part of which is due to the impetus of the principal current and the other to the incidental motion and return flow.[111]

Kemp noted how the effect of the swirling and spiralling folds of the drapery underline this analogy.[112] Leonardo's fascination for the movement of hair is expressed even more so in a passage of the *Treatise on Painting*, mentioned earlier in chapter 2 (app. 1, no. 1):

> Depict hair which an imaginary wind causes to play about youthful faces, and adorn heads you paint with curling locks of various kinds. Do not do like those who plaster hair with glue, making faces appear as if turned to glass, another increased madness for those for whom it is not enough that mariners coming from eastern parts should bring gum arabic to prevent the wind from changing the order of their ringlets, so that they must still keep seeking a remedy.

It has not been noted before that parallels for Mona Lisa's hairstyle can be found in Leonardo's earlier work, as is the case for drapery motifs. A drawing of an idealised female head, now in the Uffizi, is revealing in this respect (fig. 125). Leonardo lavished meticulous care on the intricate coiffure of the young woman, depicting tresses flowing freely over her shoulder and braids intertwined with veils and ribbons, decorated with a large jewel on the forehead. More curling locks hang loose at her cheeks. On the right side of her face, the lower part of these locks was, at an unknown point in time, covered with white paint to shorten them. Originally,

---

[110] 'Prese in Milano Salaì milanese per suo creato, il qual era vaghissimo di grazia e di bellezza, avendo begli capegli, ricci et inanellati, de' quali Lionardo si dilettò molto', Vasari 1966-87, vol. 4, p. 28. Translation: Vasari 1996, vol. 1, p. 634-635.

[111] 'Nota il moto del liuello del acqua, il quale fa vso de' capell, che ànno due moti, de' quali l'uno attēde al peso del uello, l'altro al liniamento delle volte; così l'acqua à le sue volte revertiginose, delle quali vna parte attende al inpeto del corso principale, l'altro attēde al moto incidēte e reflesso.' Transcription and translation: Richter, no. 389, with minor corrections by: Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, vol. 1, p. 113, no. 12579.

[112] Kemp 1981, p. 265. For a similar drawing of water resembling plaited hair, see: Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, vol. 1, p. 150-151, no. 12659.

they reached down to her chest as Lisa's locks do.[113] Notably, her dress is similar to the one Leonardo chose for Mary in his *Annunciation* and *Mona Lisa* (figs. 9, 6), although this is difficult to see well as the garment is only cursorily indicated. In all three cases, the neckline consists of a border to which the gathered material of the bodice is attached. Leonardo's idealized female head also recalls similar drawings by Verrocchio, aptly characterized by Vasari in the passage cited above as 'beautiful in expression and in the adornment of the hair'. A drawing now in the British Museum is an outstanding example of Verrocchio's delicate treatment of flowing tresses (fig. 126).[114] Braids are intricately bound up and abundant curls frame the head.

Like various elements of the drapery, Mona Lisa's hairstyle derives from Leonardo's early Florentine years. He inherited his fascination for elegant tresses blown up by the wind from Verrocchio. The motif of long, curly locks hanging loose on either side of the head regularly appears in Leonardo's work. For instance, in both versions of the *Virgin of the Rocks* Mary wears her hair exactly this way (figs. 12-13).[115] It is an elegant hairstyle which Leonardo clearly thought fitting for an idealized head, whether it was the Virgin Mary or an idealized portrait like *Mona Lisa*.

4.1. Timeless beauty

The analysis of the origins of the different motifs used for the dress of *Mona Lisa* shows that the transparent overgown is an artistic invention that literally veils the contemporary dress. Long ago, Kenneth Clark hypothesized that Leonardo added the garment to give the portrait a timeless appearance. Did Leonardo indeed consciously set out to cover up the original Florentine fashion of his sitter or was it an unintentional by-product of his interest in drapery?

In the fifteenth century, there was some debate on the subject of appropriate dress in art. When discussing decorum, Alberti stressed that figures should be clothed according to their dignity and action. For instance, Venus and Minerva should not be portrayed in military garb, nor Mars and Jupiter in women's dress.[116] The first to extend the discussion to the realm of portraiture was the Florentine architect and sculptor Filarete in 1464. In his treatise on architecture, written while in the service of the Sforza in Milan, he reacted fiercely against the practice of portraying contemporaries in ancient costume, condemning in particular Donatello's equestrian monument of Gattamelata, erected a decade or so earlier, in 1453.[117] Like Alberti, he made these remarks in the context of decorum. Filarete first discussed how the limbs of a figure's body should conform to his or her age and how the expression of a saint should conform to his or her character. He then continued:

---

[113] For the attribution of the drawing to Leonardo, see: Florence 1992, p. 114-115, cat. 4.15. There is no consensus on the time of alteration of the length of the locks of hair. Most scholars regard it as a later addition, while others believe it was done at an early stage, since the use of white paint for corrections is seen more often in the Verrocchio workshop. See Hugo Chapman in: London / Florence 2010, p. 200, cat. 48. I am grateful to Giorgio Marini for discussing this drawing with me during firsthand examination of the original in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi on 13 November 2012.

[114] Patricia Lee Rubin connected this drawing to Giulano's joust for Simonetta Vespucci, in particular to the drawing of the sleeping nymph (fig. 122). See: London 1999, p. 184-187, cat. 29.

[115] Another example is a study for the head of *Mary in the Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (New York, Metropolitan Museum, inv. no. 1951 51.90), a design that ultimately was never carried out. See Vincent Delieuvin in: Paris 2012, p. 133, cat. 35.

[116] The relevant passage from Alberti is quoted in chapter 3, p. 106.

[117] For a more elaborate analysis of Filarete's comment in relation to Gattamelata's antique cuirass, which is in fact combined with contemporary armour, saddle and stirrups, thus creating a rather hybrid attire, see: Zitzlsperger 2012, p. 118-119.

The same should be done with pose and clothing. Do not as the aforementioned [Donatello] who made a horse in bronze to the memory of Gattamelata. It is so deformed that it has been rarely praised. When you make a figure of a man who has lived in our own times, he should not be dressed in the antique fashion but as he was. What would it look like if you wanted to portray the Duke of Milan and dressed him in clothes that he did not wear? It would not look well and it would not look like him. It would be the same to make the figure of Caesar or Hannibal and make them timid and dress them in the clothes that we wear today. Even though the figures appeared bold and brave, they would not seem to be themselves if they were dressed in modern clothing. For this reason they should be done according to their quality and to their nature.[118]

It is no coincidence that Filarete mentioned the Duke of Milan becoming unrecognizable without his usual garb to illustrate his point. Although he does not differentiate as strictly as subsequent art theoreticians and modern art historians do between what would later evolve into the separate genres of portraiture and history painting, Filarete actually defended the standard practice of Sforza court portraiture. As described in chapter 3, lavish attire was indispensable at the Milanese court and was therefore painstakingly recorded in portraiture. Chapter 4 cites the example of Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who in 1471 prescribed that he and his wife should be portrayed in gold brocade, which was the contemporary fabric befitting his status. In the case of a female sitter, Filarete's argument of recognizability was even weightier. In portraiture it was standard practice to idealize women nearly beyond recognition, thus increasing the importance of their dress and hairstyle as identifying marks. The analysis of the portraits of Beatrice d'Este, Duchess of Milan, in chapter 3 shows that she is consistently depicted with the exact same hairstyle in order to guarantee her recognizability.[119] Apparently the matter was important to Filarete, since he returned to the subject elsewhere in his treatise, elaborating on the same arguments:

Also suit the dress to the quality of those you represent. If you have to do a thing that represents the present time, do not dress your figures in the antique fashion. In the same way, if you have to represent antiquity, do not represent them in modern dress. Do not do as many I have already seen who alter the suitability of clothing. Frequently they have given modern dress to the ancients. Masolino sins in this, for many times he has made saints and dressed them in the modern fashion. This should not be done at all. There are masters who are good in other things but who have armed men of today in the antique fashion. What sort of respect is this? What sort of consideration? If I had been doing it for one of my things, I would not have done it. I would have dressed him in the clothes that he wore. The aforementioned horse [Donatello's equestrian statue of Gattamelata] is to be criticized for this. Take care to avoid these errors.[120]

---

[118] 'così e ancora gli abiti & loro stare & non come elsopradetto che fece uno cavallo di bronzo a memoria di ghatta melata & e tanto sconsome chene stato lodato perche quando fa una figura duno che sia de nostri tempi non si vuol fare collabito antico ma come lui husa cosi fare: che cosa parebbe che tu volessi fare il ducha di Milano & farlo con uno habito che lui non husasse non starebbe bene & non parebbe detto. Cosi ancora affare la fighura di Cexare o dAnnibale & fargli timidi & colli habiti susano oggi & benche ardite & pronte parrebbono dette. Il perche si vogliono fare secondo loro qualita & loro essere.' Filarete 1965, vol. 1, p. 306 (translation) and vol. 2, Book XXIII, f. 179r-v (facsimile).

[119] For dress in court portraiture, see: chapter 3, 'The portrayal of splendour', p. 86-89. For Galeazzo Maria's portrait commission, see: chapter 4, p. 131. For hairstyle in Beatrice's portraits, see: chapter 3, 'Conveying coiffures', p. 94-97.

[120] '& cosi adattare gli abiti secondo loro qualita di quegli tu rapresenti che se tu avessi affare una cosa che rapresentasse il tempo doggi: non vestido alanticha & cosi ancora se ai arapresentare lantico nollo vestire a lusanza doggi & non fare come molto o gia veduti che anno tramutato questo atto degli habiti che molte volte anno alle' fighure antiche fatto habiti moderni & in questo pecchо Masolino che motle volte faceva santi & vestivagli alla moderna non si vuol fare per niente & anche di quegli che son bene per altro buoni

In short, according to Filarete people should be depicted wearing the dress of their day. Otherwise they would look ridiculous and their recognizability would be compromised.
A lengthy passage in Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting* can be read as a reaction against Filarete's point of view.[121] Leonardo advises painters to avoid contemporary attire in painting at all times (app. 1, no. 8):

The garments of figures should be in keeping with age and decorum; that is an old man should wear a long robe, and a young man should be adorned with a garment which does not extend above the shoulders, except for those who have professed religion. As far as possible avoid the costumes of your own day, unless they belong to the religious group just mentioned. Costumes of our own period should not be depicted unless it be on tombstones in churches, so that we may be spared being laughed at by our successors for the mad fashions of men and leave behind only things that may be admired for their dignity and beauty.

Based on the same principles of decorum, Leonardo adopts the opposite position, arguing that contemporary fashions will be perceived as ridiculous in the future.
Leonardo reinforced his point with an elaborate description of the fashions he remembered from his childhood:

I remember, in my childhood, having seen with my own eyes, men both great and small, with all the edges of their garments scalloped at all points, head, foot, and side, and it even seemed such a fine idea at that time that they pinked the scallops. They wore hoods of the same fashion, as well as shoes, and scalloped cock's combs of various colours, which came out of the main seams of their garments. Furthermore, I saw the shoes, caps, purses, weapons, the collars of their garments, the edges of jackets reaching to the feet, the trains of their cloaks, and indeed everybody who would look well was covered up to the mouth with points of long, sharp scallops.

The scalloped or dagged hems of garments and accessories that Leonardo describes were indeed fashionable in his youth. In fact, the Florentine sumptuary laws prohibited them throughout the 1440s and 1450s.[122] A garment with dagged edges can be observed in Lo Scheggia's depiction of the Adimari wedding (fig. 29). The dancing women on the far left wears a *giornea* that is decoratively cut at the edges. Another example, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is the *Portrait of a Woman*, attributed to the circle of Paolo Uccello (fig. 17). This sitter wears a black *giornea* with scalloped edges, cut in leaf-like shapes.

Leonardo's description of the fashion he remembered from his childhood is followed by more examples of ridiculous extravagances from a different, but unspecified period:

At another time the sleeves began to grow in size and they became so large that each one by itself was larger than the gown alone. Later, gowns began to rise above the neck, so much that they finally covered the whole head. Then, they began to take them away so that the clothes could not be held up by the

---

maestri che anno armato huomini di questa eta almodo antico che rispetto e stato questo che consideratione che se fusse stato mio affare: per una mia cosa non larei voluto anzi larei fatto rifare nel modo che lui portava & diquesto e dabiasimare el cavallo, & la figura che apadova dibronzo la quale rapresenta ghatta melata. Siche dacquesti errori fa chevi guardi.' Filarete 1965, vol. 1, p. 314-315 (translation) and vol. 2, Book XXIV, fol. 184r (facsimile).

[121] Leonardo was certainly familiar with Filarete's treatise. Filarete was one of his predecessors in Milan and Leonardo's own architectural endeavours during his first Milanese sojourn were closely related to Filarete's work. See: Pedretti 1962, p. 15.

[122] See chapter 1, p. 37, note 135.

shoulders because they did not hang from them. Afterward, garments began to lengthen, so that men always had their arms full of their own clothes, in order not to tread on them with their feet. Later they reached such an extreme that men were clothed only as far as the flanks and the elbows, and were so tight that they suffered great torture, and many burst inside. The shoes were so tight that the toes were pushed over one another and became covered with corns.

According to Pedretti, Leonardo referred to dress that was fashionable in his early manhood years.[123] It is however impossible to relate this account to the changes of dress styles that actually took place in Tuscany or elsewhere in Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century. Moreover, Leonardo's phrasing makes a somewhat cryptic and improbable impression. What to make of garments that do not rest on the shoulder or that are so tight that they torment the wearer? On closer scrutiny, however, this description beautifully matches fourteenth-century fashion comments. Of course Leonardo had not witnessed these styles with his own eyes, but he certainly would have had access to descriptions of the time.

The comments of the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani (c. 1280-1348) on several sudden changes of dress as they occurred in 1342 are remarkably close to Leonardo's description.[124] Prompted by economic welfare and technological developments in dressmaking, dress styles changed rapidly all over Europe early in the 1340s. Clothes became more tightly fitting and shorter, exposing larger parts of the body. These changes did not go unnoticed and aroused a great deal of comment at the time.[125] In his history of Florence, Villani lamented the loss of the ancient and, according to him, far nobler Florentine dress, describing the new style as follows:

Young people dressed themselves in a *cotta* or *gonnella*, so short and tight that one could not get dressed without the help of others, and a girdle like the girth of a horse with showy buckles and points, and with big pouches in the German style on their broad chests, and they wore their *cappuccio* [chaperon] like jugglers, reaching down to the waist and beyond, so that it was both *cappuccio* and mantle at the same time, with many decorations and scallops; the *becchetto* [pointed tail at the back] of the *cappuccio* reached down to the ground to be wrapped around the head for warmth, and they had long beards to look fiercer in battle. The knights wore a tight and belted overtunic or *guarnacca* [overgown] with hanging sleeve pieces lined with vair and ermine reaching to the ground.[126]

The *cappuccio*, known as chaperon in English, was a popular headgear consisting of a hood with a short cape covering the shoulders and a decorative tail at the back of the hood, called the

[123] Based on Leonardo's style of writing, Pedretti dated this passage to the early 1490s. He reasoned that Leonardo, who was almost forty years old at that time, thus referred to the changes of dress styles he witnessed in his twenties and thirties. Pedretti 1964, p. 114.
[124] Leonardo was certainly familiar with Villani's work. On one of the pages of the Codex Leicester, now in the possession of Bill and Melinda Gates, Leonardo discusses various geological issues, quoting some of Villani's ideas on the formation of a gap at Mount Gonfalina. See Claire Farago in: New York 2003, p. 623.
[125] For a discussion of fourteenth-century comments on dress, see: Newton 1980, p. 6-13, for Villani in particular see p. 6-7. On the new fashion in the 1340s, compare also: Mosher Stuard 2006, p. 24-26.
[126] 'sì si vestieno i giovani una cotta overo gonnella, corta e stretta, che non si potea vestire sanza aiuto d'altri, e una coreggia come cinghia di cavallo con isfoggiate fibbie e puntale, e con grande iscarsella alla tedesca sopra il pettignone, e il capuccio vestito a modo di sconcobrini col batolo fino alla cintola e più, ch'era capuccio e mantello, con molti fregi e intagli; il becchetto del capuccio lungo fino a terra per avolgere al capo per lo freddo, e colle barbe lunghe per mostrarsi più fieri innarme. I cavalieri vestivano uno sorcotto, overo guarnacca stretta, ivi su cinti, e lle punte de' manicottoli lunghi infino in terra foderati di vaio e ermellini.' Villani 1979, p. 231, Book 12, no. IV.

becchetto.[127] A profile portrait drawing of Petrarch shows the poet wearing a *cappuccio* with a long *becchetto* at the back (fig. 127).[128] Villani's account of chaperons with a cape so long that it became a mantle may well have been the inspiration for Leonardo's description of gowns that do not hang from the shoulder. Similarly, the long sleeve pieces described by Villani may explain Leonardo's reference to lengthening garments that have to be held in order not to stumble on them. Villani's comments have a moralist tone of voice and he probably gave a somewhat exaggerated account of the typical features of the new dress style. Leonardo, in turn, carries it even further, probably both out of ignorance of the true appearance of these garments and to emphasize his point on the foolishness of bygone fashions.

This does not mean Leonardo never depicted the fashion he grew up with. As Gombrich has pointed out, Leonardo deliberately clothed his grotesque figures in old-fashioned garments and headdresses to make them look even more ridiculous, thereby illustrating the very point he made in the passage quoted above.[129] Two examples are now in the Royal Collection, both representing an elderly couple. The first shows a woman in profile facing a man (fig. 128). She wears a high *sella*, one of the headdresses of Flemish origin popular in Leonardo's youth. The second drawing, a satire on aged lovers, shows a woman dressed in the fashion of the 1440s and 1450s, consisting of a belted *cioppa* with wide sleeves and extremely high headgear (fig. 129).[130] An early example of this type of high headdress, dating from c. 1440-1444, and very similar dress can be observed in Lippi's double portrait, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 15).[131] As an associate of Leonardo noted on a sheet in the Codex Atlanticus (app. 1, no. 13): 'Monstrous is that which has a huge head and short legs; and monstrous is that which with rich clothes is of great poverty; and thus we say that well-proportioned is that in which the parts are in correspondence with the whole.'[132]

Both Leonardo's examples of previous fashions and his grotesque drawings illustrate his point that what may seem beautiful and elegant at a time when everyone is wearing it, becomes hilarious when it has gone out of fashion. To be sure, he does not criticize those who are fashionable, but merely warns the artist not to depict these fashions, for in time they would make the painting look ridiculous. The painter should only depict 'things that may be admired for their dignity and beauty'. How this should be achieved can be read in a passage of the *Trattato della pittura* entitled 'Of the way to clothe figures' (app. 1, no. 19):

Observe decorum in clothing your figures according to their station and their age. And above all, see that draperies do not conceal movement; and that the limbs are not cut off by folds nor by the shadows of folds. As much as you can imitate the Greeks and the Latins in the manner of revealing limbs when the

---

[127] In the fifteenth century the *cappuccio* was still worn in Florence, but the shape was different. The edge of the face opening was stuffed to form a brim (*mazzocchio*) that was put on the head. The shoulder cape was draped around the head and the *becchetto* was either draped as well or was left hanging loose over the left shoulder. On the *cappuccio* in Florentine dress, see: Bridgeman 1986, p. 95-104.

[128] For this drawing, see: Richards 2000, p. 244, cat. 7 and plate 35.

[129] Gombrich 1954, p. 200. For a discussion of the entire group of comic heads, see: Kwakkelstein 1994, p. 107-112.

[130] The first drawing (RL 12453) is a fragment from the Codex Atlanticus, f. 31r-a. See: London 2002b, p. 84, cat. 36. On the second drawing (RL 12449), see: London 2002b, p. 94, cat. 40.

[131] On the *sella* and Lippi's portrait, see: chapter 1, p. 22.

[132] The text was written in a different hand than Leonardo's and was most likely dictated by him to one of his workshop members. As Carlo Vecce has shown, Leonardo, like Cellini, did this more than once. See: Vecce 2003, p. 62. Leonardo's associates Salaì, Tomaso Masini, known as Zoroastro, and Lorenzo have been proposed as possible authors. See: Pedretti 1964, p. 65, note 74 (Salaì); Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, vol. 3, p. 35, no. 19089 (Zoroastro or Lorenzo).

wind presses draperies against them, and make few folds; make many folds only for old men in positions of authority who are heavily clothed.

Contrary to Filarete, Leonardo advises against the use of contemporary dress, turning instead to drapery as rendered by the ancient Greeks and Romans. It can therefore be concluded that Leonardo deliberately covered up Mona Lisa's original fashionable attire.

4.2. Idealized dress

The two major stages in the process of executing Mona Lisa's dress have been reconstructed here for the first time, disproving the common assumption that the finished portrait shows the dress the sitter was wearing when posing for Leonardo. Analysis of the infrared reflectogram has revealed that although Leonardo started portraying the local Florentine fashion of the day, later on he added the partially translucent overgarment that hides the contemporary dress. The comparison of *Mona Lisa* and the infrared reflectogram with the workshop copy, Leonardo's notes on drapery and Delieuvin's reconstruction of the genesis of Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* enabled me to date this addition to his second Milanese period (1508-1513).

In previous attempts to make sense of Mona Lisa's overgarment, scholars have limited their efforts to comparing the painting with other portraits. However, by extending the comparison to images of women in painting and drawing of religious and mythological subject matter, I have demonstrated that Leonardo did not depict contemporary fashion, as hitherto presumed. Instead, he drew upon the pictorial tradition with which he became familiar in his early Florentine years in Verrocchio's workshop, borrowing elements from the latter's work and elaborating on motifs previously explored in his own work. Leonardo clothed his sitter in a garment used for nymphs, goddesses and the Virgin Mary, complemented with motifs derived from the dress and hairstyle of angels and Verrocchio's famous idealized heads.

The extensive discussion in chapter 2 of the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci addresses the humanist notion that outer beauty represents inner virtue. I have pointed out that Leonardo used plain dress to underline Ginevra's beauty and thus her virtue.[133] Lisa Gherardini is also depicted in plain dress, but it is not just the lack of ornament that alludes to her character. Her idealized dress does so too. Leonardo avoided conspicuous fashions, making use instead of an aesthetic ideal of thin, elegantly draped, partly opaque fabrics, previously only deployed in painting to clad nymphs, goddesses and biblical figures. *Mona Lisa* may not bear an inscription on the back like the *Ginevra de' Benci*, but the painting conveys a similar message (fig. 2). Lisa also adorns her virtue with her beauty and this is emphasized by her dress. The idealization of the female figure in portraiture has thus reached a peak in *Mona Lisa*. Not only are her features beautiful, but she is also clad in timeless, worthy garments, all fashioned to highlight her chaste and noble nature.

Joanna Woods-Marsden proposed that Lisa's peculiar attire, lack of ornaments and unusual hairstyle could have been the reason that the portrait was never delivered to Francesco del Giocondo, who may have rejected it on these grounds.[134] However, the new date for the translucent overgarment, added in Milan, suggests otherwise. While he was in Florence, near his patron, Leonardo did not change Lisa's original attire. He started reworking her dress only after he left the city in 1508, five years after receiving the commission. It remains uncertain why Francesco never received the commissioned portrait, but whatever the case, Leonardo seems to have seized the opportunity to pursue his own artistic ideals.

---

[133] See chapter 2, sections 'Ginevra's portrait and the *paragone*' and 'The poetics of plain dress', p. 56-65.
[134] See p. 142 and 160 of this chapter.

Although art historians have always grasped Leonardo's intention to idealize the sitter, they have focused their attention exclusively on her physiognomy. My research has demonstrated that the depiction of the dress was an integral part of that process of idealization. What started out as a portrait of a wealthy Florentine merchant's wife, dressed in fashionable attire, over time became the embodiment of Leonardo's ideals of beauty. It is impossible to say, at least on sartorial grounds, whether *Mona Lisa* should be considered a portrait of Lisa Gherardini or, as Jack Greenstein and Michael Kwakkelstein have argued, a showpiece that illustrates what art should be. Both scholars regarded the lack of ornaments indicating personal status as an argument to support the theory that the portrait does not represent Lisa Gherardini, or at any rate no longer represents her.[135] The omission of jewellery, however, is not unusual for Leonardo's portraits and the absence of contemporary fashion does not necessarily mean that the subject of the painting was not an existing woman. Regardless of the identity of the sitter, it is clear that Leonardo put his theory into practice and successfully so: *Mona Lisa* does not show 'the mad fashions' of the day and, more than any other work of art, has become a painting that is 'admired for its dignity and beauty' (app. 1, no. 8).

[135] Greenstein believes the subject of the painting is a fictive, smiling woman and that the portrait was never commissioned, but painted as a display piece. This would account for the unusual clothing, amongst other things. Greenstein 2004, p. 32. However, the discovery of Agostino Vespucci's margin note on *Mona Lisa* is convincing evidence that it was, at least in conception, a portrait of Lisa Gherardini. The underdrawing, revealing characteristics of Florentine fashion, points to an existing Florentine sitter as well. Kwakkelstein suggested that Leonardo started working on a portrait commissioned by Lisa's husband, but changed his mind when he realized he would not be able to publish his planned treatise on painting before his death. He then may have decided to keep the portrait with him and use it as an epitome of his ideas. Kwakkelstein 2011b, p. 21-23.

6. Conclusion

Leonardo's portraits of women stand out for the sitters' plain dress. Over the course of the twentieth century, scholars occasionally took note of the lack of ornament but the subject was never an object of study in its own right. The different and diverging interpretations of the sitters' dress – especially in *Mona Lisa* but also in *Ginevra de' Benci* – were never assessed either. It was high time Leonardo's female portraits were examined in the context of dress history. This perspective has yielded significant new insights into these much-studied portraits.

Leonardo's extant female portraits proved highly suitable for examination from the perspective of dress history. Although there are but a handful, they are fairly evenly spread over time so that each of them functions as a benchmark. Leonardo painted Ginevra de' Benci's portrait early in his career between 1475 and 1480 (figs. 1-2). The Milanese portraits of Cecilia Gallerani and the *Belle Ferronnière* were done about ten years later, in the early 1490s (figs. 3-4). Yet another decade later, he drew a cartoon for a portrait of Isabella d'Este (fig. 5). A few years later, he started work on *Mona Lisa*, but since the major changes in her dress date from his second Milanese sojourn, from 1508 to 1513, it represents the last phase of his career (fig. 6). The development of Leonardo's treatment of dress could thus be beautifully traced.

The sheer diversity and scope of the source material for each portrait called for a different perspective in each chapter. After the introduction to dress in Florentine portraiture up to c. 1475 in the first chapter, the second chapter on Ginevra de' Benci's portrait dealt with art theory and the origins of the notion that austerity contributes to a woman's beauty. From Ginevra, a Florentine sitter of the upper middle class, focus shifted in the third and fourth chapters to the aristocracy of the northern Italian courts. The importance of extravagant court dress was discussed in the third chapter. The fourth chapter explored the relationship between painter and patron and its influence on the final result. Finally, the chapter on *Mona Lisa* returned to Florence and concentrated on workshop practice in relation to art theory.

1. Fashion

Late fifteenth-century Florentine and Milanese fashion is a recurrent theme in this thesis. My comparison of dress in Leonardo's portraits to sartorial conventions in the social contexts of the Florentine republic and the courts of Milan and Mantua as well as to dress conventions in portraiture resulted in the reconstruction of the meaning of the sitter's garments, for instance Ginevra's *gamurra*. Other previously unknown garments could be identified, such as Ginevra's black shawl, and two portraits dated more precisely on the basis of dress. In the case of the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, I was able to confirm the previously suggested date of c. 1489-1490. Similarly, the date of c. 1493-1494 for *La Belle Ferronnière* proposed by Luke Syson on stylistic grounds is confirmed by her dress. This early date implies that the sitter is most likely Beatrice d'Este.

Above all, this exercise has made clear to what extent Leonardo adhered to contemporary fashion, including its written and unwritten rules, and more importantly how he deviated from it. Leonardo omitted conspicuous fashions, such as gold brocaded fabrics, jewellery and other ornaments, from all his portraits of women. While in his grotesque heads he deployed old-fashioned dress to enhance the effect of ugliness, in his female portraits he carefully avoided depicting the excesses of fashion. His first portrait shows Ginevra de' Benci in

contemporary yet plain garments, a *gamurra* and a linen cap (fig. 1). Because of the simplicity of her utilitarian dress, the portrait lacks the eye-catching features of fashion in the 1470s, such as multi-coloured fabrics and hair ornaments. The later portraits, the *Lady with an Ermine*, the *Belle Ferronnière* and the cartoon representing Isabella d'Este, show fundamental adjustments to the lavish court dress worn in Milan and Mantua (figs. 3-5). Leonardo consistently avoided conspicuous jewellery and stiff gold brocades and toned down sartorial extremes. In *Mona Lisa* he took it a step further by hiding the contemporary dress under a partly transparent garment, reminiscent of classical drapery (fig. 6). It turns out that specific details of this garment and the sitter's hairstyle are not related to contemporary fashion, but can be traced back to pictorial motifs that Leonardo and his teacher Verrocchio had developed earlier.

In addition to the different fashions of various Italian city-states, I also touched upon foreign dress. The presence of Spanish styles in Northern Italy in the late fifteenth century is generally recognized, but my research has shown that their diffusion took place earlier than previously thought. When and how Spanish fashion spread throughout Italy remain questions for further research. Around 1500, French influence on Italian dress began to increase, but French court fashion has attracted very little scholarly attention to date. More research on this particular subject may increase our understanding of Italian fashions of the day as well.

2. Art theory and workshop practice

The present research has shown that Leonardo's depiction of dress was profoundly influenced by art theory and a humanist concept of female beauty. Leonardo was a prolific writer and the *paragone* was one of his major topics. The question of which art form is best suited to represent female beauty is at the heart of this debate. Dress is obviously closely connected with female beauty and, inspired by ancient Roman writers such as Cicero, Leonardo incorporated the notion that a woman is more beautiful without ornaments in his own writings. In Neo-Platonist thought, a woman's physical and spiritual beauty went hand in hand. True beauty was a matter of inner virtue, not of exhibiting outer finery. The idea had already been revived in the vernacular poetry of Dante and Petrarch, but Leonardo was the first painter to apply this concept of beauty to portraiture, advising other painters, too, not to use excessive ornamentation. Leonardo's personal preference for ornate dress that his advice applied to painting exclusively.

A chronological examination of Leonardo's extant painted portraits shows a continuing elaboration of this notion of female beauty. Having first faithfully recorded plain dress in the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci (figs. 1-2), Leonardo invented a type of adjusted dress in his portraits of women of the Milanese court, *Cecilia Gallerani* and *La Belle Ferronnière* (figs. 3-4). The heavy, patterned fabrics of courtly attire were transformed into supple, monochrome material, revealing a living body underneath through folds. This entailed a gradual process of reworking the painting, adding garments and omitting distracting details. The foundation of Leonardo's interest in drapery and the human body had already been laid during his early years in Verrocchio's workshop and culminated in *Mona Lisa* (fig. 6). Over a period of several years Leonardo completely covered the sitter's Florentine fashionable dress with a free-flowing semi-transparent garment, composed of several stock motifs employed earlier for Biblical and mythological figures.

The recently published results of scientific analyses of several of his portraits were crucial in assessing Leonardo's working procedure. Unfortunately, the latest results on the *Lady*

with an Ermine appeared just after completion of this thesis and could not be included.[1] These and the forthcoming results of technical research on the *Belle Ferronnière* will certainly provide further occasion to elaborate on the subject.[2] It is to be hoped that technical research will be carried out on more Quattrocento female portraits by leading painters such as Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio and Ambrogio de Predis. Not least because it would make it possible to place Leonardo's workshop practice in a broader context.

Art historians too often assume that Leonardo faithfully depicted what his sitters were wearing. Although he often started out sketching his sitter's true dress, he kept reworking it over time. This is especially apparent in the *Lady with an Ermine* and *Mona Lisa*. Infrared images of his earliest portrait, the *Ginevra de' Benci*, show few alterations to the dress. It is well known that Leonardo often worked from nature and then gradually idealized his subject. There is evidence that he did the same with his subjects' dress. Furthermore, Leonardo's idealization of dress was not exclusively aesthetically motivated. It served to reveal the sitter's inner virtue, which he did not want to overshadow with an outward display of ostentatious finery.

3. Patrons

Leonardo's approach to dress was notably different from that of his contemporaries, who conformed to the prevailing social values attached to dress and textiles. In Florence wearing locally produced silk fabrics and depicting them in portraiture was a matter of civic pride and family honour. At the court of Milan splendour served to legitimize power and in Mantua Isabella d'Este was the embodiment of the expression of status through dress and jewellery. Portraiture reflected this appreciation of material wealth. Yet wherever Leonardo settled, he was able to impose his idiosyncratic ideal of the representation of female beauty on his patrons and sitters.

As the patron who commissioned the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, Bernardo Bembo and his Florentine circle must have been highly influential in the development of Leonardo's notion of female beauty. It was through Bembo and the Benci family that Leonardo became acquainted with humanist thought. The Florentine cultural climate of the 1470s, governed by the Medici, in which Neo-Platonic philosophy and courtly love flourished, formed the crucial setting for the development of Leonardo's thoughts on the depiction of dress in portraiture.

Later on in his career, Leonardo apparently imposed these ideas on his patrons rather than complying with their demands. In Milan he followed none of the conventions of court portraiture. Why he was granted such a high degree of freedom is impossible to say, since Milanese sources are silent on this matter. However, the case study of Isabella d'Este's portrait shows that Leonardo enjoyed exceptional status and fame. The explanation may lie in part in the emancipated status of painting and, consequently, of the artist, initiated by Leonardo himself. He regarded painting as a science and his intellectual endeavours were appreciated by his patrons.[3] Although the prices of portraits were still only a fraction of what a length of silk textile or a piece of jewellery cost, the intellectual merits of painting were increasingly valued. Leonardo's reflections on female beauty and its preservation for eternity fit into this development.

---

[1] Cotte 2014.

[2] Analysis of the *Belle Ferronnière* is currently being carried out by Pascal Cotte at Lumière Technology, Paris.

[3] Compare: Syson 2011, p. 29.

4. Further research

A question that I have not addressed here is whether Leonardo influenced painters after him and if so, how. In his native Florence, portraits of plainly dressed women became increasingly popular in the 1480s and 1490s. Further research is required to clarify precisely which factors led to this preference. Was it Leonardo's influence or were there other, possibly social factors at play? At any rate, the acceptance of this new pictorial idiom in Florence is not altogether surprising, for it fitted into a republican ideal of restraint and equality preferred by local patrons. After 1500, however, painters and patrons appear to have favoured the depiction of lavish dress and jewellery again. Raphael's female portraits, for example, prominently display colourful silk fabrics and conspicuous jewels. The portrait of Maddalena Doni is a case in point (fig. 107). Similar questions can be raised regarding Leonardo's Milanese followers, including Boltraffio and Bernardino de' Conti. Contrary to the republican mode of Florence, splendour was deemed indispensable at the Northern Italian courts. Did this inhibit the emerging popularity of plain dress in portraiture or did Leonardo's influence in the portraits of the Milanese *Leonardeschi* extend to dress as well?

Leonardo da Vinci may be one the most studied and appreciated painters, both then and now, but his treatment of dress in portraiture has never been explored until now. This dress-history approach has proven valuable and contributed directly to our knowledge of the meaning of his portraits. It has also improved our understanding of Leonardo's workshop practice, art theory and his aesthetic ideals. Approaching early modern painting, and portraits in particular, from the perspective of dress history thus opens up a potentially vast research area for art historians and dress historians alike that has the potential to produce new insights, even into the work of artists who have already been at the centre of scholarly attention for a long time.

Appendix 1: Leonardo's writings on dress and drapery

The aim of this appendix is to present a reconstruction of Leonardo's writings on dress and drapery in a chronological order. Except when original manuscripts have survived, texts have been taken from the Trattato della pittura *(Codex Urbinas 1270), assembled by Francesco Melzi from Leonardo' notebooks after his death. Unless otherwise stated, dates are based on Pedretti 1964 and 1977.*

Concordance

No.	CU fol.	Lu	McM	K/W	MS Source	Date
1.	130v-131r	404	442	504, 578	-	c. 1492
2.	168v-169r	537	563	418	BN 2038 f. 4r	c. 1492
3.	169r-169v	538	572	410	BN 2038 f. 17v	c. 1492
4.	169v	539	569	414	BN 2038 f. 18r	c. 1492
5.	168r	534	562	-	-	c. 1492
6.	169v-170r	540	560	420	-	c. 1492
7.	168v	536	566	417	-	c. 1492
8.	170r-170v	541	574	408	-	c. 1492
9.	168r-168v	535	567	412	-	c. 1505-10
10.	170v	542	565	419	-	c. 1505-10
11.	170v-171r	543	570	-	-	c. 1505-10
12.	171r	544	571	413	-	c. 1505-10
13.	-	-	-	-	CA f. 1047r	c. 1508-13
14.	-	-	-	-	RL 19121a	c. 1510
15.	167r	529	559	409	-	c. 1510-15
16.	167r	530	561	-	-	c. 1510-15
17.	167r	531	568	415	-	c. 1510-15
18.	167r-167v	532	564	411	-	c. 1510-15
19.	167v-168r	533	573	416	-	c. 1510-15

1. Discorso sopra il pratico

[…] Non vedi tu che infra le humane bellezze il uiso bellissimo ferma li uiandanti, et non gli loro richi ornamenti? Et questo dico à te, che con oro od altri ricchi fregi adorni le tue figure. Non ueditu isplendenti bellezze della giouentù diminuire di loro eccellenza per gli eccessiui e troppo culti ornamenti, non hai tu uisto le montanare inuolte ne gl' inculti et poueri panni acquistare maggior bellezza, che quelle, che sono ornate?

Non usare le affettate conciature o' capellature di teste, dou' appresso deli goffi ceruelli un sol capello posto piu d' un lato che dal' altro, colui, che lo tiene, se ne promette grande infamia, credendo, che li circostanti abbandonino ogni lor primo pensiero et solo di quel parlino et solo quello riprendino; et questi tali han' sempre per lor consigliero lo spechio et il pettine, et il uento

1. Discourse upon practice

[…] Do you not see that among human beauties it is a very beautiful face and not rich ornaments that stops passers-by? And this I say to you who adorn your figures with gold or other rich trimmings, do you not see beautiful young people diminish their excellence with excessive ornamentation? Have you never seen women in the hills wrapped in plain and poor cloths[1] possessing greater beauty than those who are adorned?

Do not paint affected curls or hair-dressings such as are worn by fools fearful that a single, misplaced lock will bring disgrace upon them and that bystanders will be diverted from their own thoughts and talk of nothing else and blame them. Such people have the mirror and comb for their advisors, and the wind that disarranges their carefully dressed hair is their main enemy.

[1] McMahon translates 'panni' as 'draperies', which I have not followed here.

è loro capital nemico, sconciatore de li azzimati capegli.
Fa tu adonque alle tue teste i capegli scherzare insieme col finto uento intorno alli giouanili volti et con diuerso revoltare gratiosamente ornargli, et nō far come quelli, che gli'npiastrano con colle et fāno parere e' uisi, come se fussino inuetriati; humane pazie in aumentazione, delle quali no bastano li nauiganti à condure dalle orientali parti le gome arabbiche, per riparare, che'l vento non uarij l' equalita delle sue chiome, che di piu uanno ancora inuestigando.

Depict hair which an imaginary wind causes to play about youthful faces, and adorn heads you paint with curling locks of various kinds. Do not do like those who plaster hair with glue, making faces appear as if turned to glass, another increased madness for those for whom it is not enough that mariners coming from eastern parts should bring gum arabic to prevent the wind from changing the order of their ringlets, so that they must still keep seeking a remedy.

c. 1492
CU f.130v-131r / Ludwig 1882, no. 404.

McMahon 1956, no. 442.

2. Delle nature delle pieghe de' panni[2]
Quella parte della piega che si trova piv lontana dai sua costretti stremi, si riducierà più in sua prima natura.
Naturalmēte ogni cosa desidera mātenersi in suo essere. Il panno perchè è di eguale densità e spessitudine, sì nel suo rouescio come nel suo diritto, disidera di stare piano: onde quando lui è da qualche piega o falda costretto a lasiare essa planitia, osserua la natura della forza in quella parte di sé dov' elli è piv cōstretto, e quella parte ch'è piv lontana a essi costrignimēti troverai riducersi piu alla prima sua natura, cioè dello stare disteso ed āpio.

2. Of the nature of folds in drapery
That a part of a fold which is farthest from the ends where it is confined will fall almost nearly in its natural form.
Everything by nature tends to remain at rest. Drapery, being of equal density and thickness on its wrong side and its right, has a tendency to lie flat; therefore when you give it a fold or a plait forcing it out of its flatness, note well the result of the constraint in the part where it is most confined; and the part which is farthest from this constraint you will see the relapses most into the natural state; that is to say, lies free and flowing.

Esēplo
Sia *a b c* la piega del panno detto di sopra: *a b* sia il loco doue esso panno piegato è costretto io ti proposi che quella parte del pāno che era piv lontana ai costretti stremi si riduce piv nella sua prima natura.
Adunque *b* trouādosi piv lontano da *a c* li la piega *a b c* fia piv larga che in nessun altro suo loco.

Example
Let *a b c* be the fold of the drapery spoken of above. *a b* will be the places where this folded drapery is held fast. I maintain that the part of the drapery which is farthest from the plaited ends will revert most to its natural form.
Therefore *b* being farthest from *a* and *c* in the fold *a b c*, it will be wider there than anywhere else.

c. 1492
BN 2038 f. 4r / Richter, no. 390.

Richter, no. 390.

3.
Come a un pāno non si deve dare cōfusione di molte pieghe, anzi farne solamēte dove colle mani o colle braccia sono ritenvte, il resto sia lasciato cadere sēplicemēte doue lo tira la sua natura, e nō sia ītraversato lo ignvdo da troppi liniamēti o rōpimēti di pieghe.
Come i pāni si debō ritrare di naturale, cioè se uorai fare pāno lano usa le pieghe secōdo quello, e se sarà seta o pāno fino o da vilani o di lino o di uelo, va diversificādo a ciascuno le sue pieghe, e

3.
You ought not to give drapery a great confusion of many folds, but rather only introduce them where they are held by the hand or the arms; the rest you may let fall simply where it is its nature to flow; and do not let the nude forms be broken by too many details and interrupted folds.
How draperies should be drawn from nature: that is to say, if you want to represent woollen cloth draw the folds from that; and if it is to be silk, or fine cloth, or coarse, or of linen or of voile, vary

[2] Nos. 2-4 have been taken from Leonardo's own notes and can also be found in the *Trattato della Pittura*, Codex Urbinas 1270 fol. 168v-169v.

nō fare abito come molti fāno sopra i modelli coperti di carte o corami sotili che t'inganneresti forte.

c. 1492
BN 2038 f. 17v / Richter, no. 392.

the folds in each and do not represent dresses, as many do, from models covered with paper or thin leather which will deceive you greatly.

Richter, no. 392.

4. Delle poche pieghe ne' pāni
Come le figure essēdo vestite di mātello, nō debono tāto mostrare lo nvdo che 'l mātello paia ī sulle carni, se già tu nō volessi che 'l mātello fusse sulle carni, īperochè tu debi pensare che tra 'l mantello e le carni sono altre vesti che īpediscono lo scoprire e 'l parere la forma delle mēbra sopra il mātello;
e quelle mēbra che fai discoprire, fa le in modo grosse che gli apparisca sotto il mātello altre vestimēta, ma solo farai scoprire la quasi uera grossezza delle mēbra a una nīfa o uno āgielo, i quali si figurano vestiti di sottili vestimēti, sospīti e īpressi dal soffiare de' uēnti sopra le mēbra di dette figure.

c. 1492
BN 2038 f. 18 / Richter, no. 391.

4. Of small folds in draperies
How figures dressed in a cloak should not show the shape so much that the cloak looks as if it were next the flesh: since you surely cannot wish the cloak to be next to the flesh, for you must suppose that between the flesh and the cloak there are other garments which prevent the form of the limbs appearing distinctly through the cloak. And those limbs which you allow to be seen you must make thicker so that the other garments may appear to be under the cloak. But only give something of the true thickness of the limbs to a nymph or an angel, which are represented in thin draperies, pressed and clinging to the limbs of the figures by the action of the wind.

Richter, no. 391

5. De' vestimenti
I uestimenti deono essere diuersificati, di uarie nature di falde, mediante la qualità de uestimenti, cioè, se gliè panno grosso e raro, farà pieghe macharonesche e rare; e se gliè di mediocre grossezza et denso, farà le pieghe afacciate e di picoli angoli;
e sopra'l tutto ti ricorda in ogni qualità di panno di fare le pieghe infra l'una rompitura e l'altra gross' in mezzo e sotili da lati, e la minore grossezza d' essa piega fia nel mezo de l'angolo rottondo della piega.

c. 1492
CU f. 168r / Ludwig 1882, no. 534.

5. Of garments
Garments should be diversified with different kinds of folds which vary according to the kind of garment. If the fabric is thick and loosely woven, make long, thin folds, like macaroni, and if it is of medium thickness and tightly woven, make the folds smooth, with small angles. Above all, with every kind of fabric remember to make the folds, between one break in the surface of the cloth and the next, thick in the middle and thin on the sides. The smallest thickness of the fold should be in the middle of the rounded angle of the fold.

McMahon 1956, no. 562.

6. Delle pieghe de panni in scorto
Doue la figura scorta, fagli uedere maggior numero di pieghe che dou' ella nō scorta. Et le sue membra sieno circondate da pieghe spesse e giranti in torno à' esse membra, *A* sia, dove sta l'occhio; *m n* manda il mezo di ciascuni circuli piu lontani da l'occhio che loro fini;
n o li mostra diritti, perché si troua à riscontro; *p q* li manda per contrario. Si che usa questa discrezzione nelle pieghe, che circondano le braccia, gambe od altro.

c. 1492
CU f. 169v-170r / Ludwig 1882, no. 540.

6. Of folds and draperies in foreshortening
Where the figure is foreshortened, portray a larger number of folds than where it is not foreshortened, and the limbs should be surrounded by numerous folds swirling around them. Let *a* be the position of the eye; *m n* puts the middle of each circle farther away from the eye than its ends; *n o* shows them straight, because they are in front of the eye*; p q* puts them on the opposite side. Be sure to make this difference in the folds that surround the arms, legs, or other parts of the body.

McMahon 1956, no. 560.

7. Openioni de panni e loro pieghe, che sono di tre nature

Molti sono quelli che amano le pieghature delle falde de pani con angoli acuti, crudi e spediti, altri con angoli quasi insensibili, altri senza alcuni angoli, ma in locho di quelli fano curvate.

Di queste tre sorti, alcuni uol pāni grossi et di poche pieghe, altri sotili e di gran' numero di pieghe, altri piglia la parte di mezo. Et di questi tre tu seguiterai le lor openioni, mettendone di ciascuna sorte nella tua storia, aggiongendoui di quelli, che paiono uechi pezzati, e noui abondanti di pāno, et alcuni miseri secondo le qualita di chi tu uesti; et cosi fa dei loro colori.

c. 1492
CU f. 168v / Ludwig 1882, no. 536.

7. Opinions regarding draperies and their folds, which are of three sorts

There are many who love breaks in folds of drapery with angles that are acute, harsh, and sharp; others prefer them with almost imperceptible angles, others without any angles, but with curves instead. Within these three categories, some desire thick draperies with few folds, while others take a middle ground. You will follow all three of these opinions, putting some of each in your narrative painting, adding to them some old mended draperies, and some new, abundant draperies, and some that are wretched, according to the position of life of him who you clothe, and apply colours in the same way.

McMahon 1956, no. 566.

8. Delli modi del uestire le sue figure et abiti diuersi

Li abiti delle figure sieno acomodati al età ed al decoro, cioè, che'l uecchio sia togato, il giouane ornato d'abito, che mancho occupi il collo da li omeri delle spalle in sù, eccetto quegli, che fan professione in religgione. Et fugire il piu che si po gli abiti della sua ettà, eccetto che quādo si scontrassino essere delli sopra detti, et nō si debbono usare se nō nelle figure, ch'anno à somigliare a quelli, che son sepolti per le chiese, accio che si riserui riso nelli nostri successori delle pazze inuentzioni degli huomini, ouero che lascino admiratzione della loro degnita e bellezza.

Et io alli miei giorni m'aricordo hauer uisto nella mia pueritia li huomini e picoli e grandi, auere tutti li stremi de' uestimenti frappati in tutte le parti, si da capo, come da pie e da lato, et ancora parue tāto bella inuenzione à quell'età, che frappauano ancora le dette frappe, e portauano li capuci in simile modo et le scarpe, et le creste frappate, che usciuano delle principai cuciture delli uestimenti, di uari colori. Di puoi uidi le scarpe, berrette, scarselle, armi, che si portano per offendere, i colari de uestimenti, li stremi de giupponi da piedi, le code de uestimenti, et in effetto infino alle bocche di chi uolea parer belli erano apontate di lunghe et acute punte.

Nell'altra età cominciorno à crescere le maniche, et eran talmente grandi, che ciascuna perse era maggiore della uesta. Poi cominciorno à alzare li uestimenti intorno al collo, tanto ch'alla fine copersono tutto il capo. Puoi cominciorno à spogliarlo in modo, che i panni nō poteuano essere sostenuti dalle spalle, perche non ui si posauan sopra. Puoi cominciorno à slongare si li

8. Of ways of clothing figures and of diverse garments

The garments of figures should be in keeping with age and decorum; that is an old man should wear a long robe, and a young man should be adorned with a garment which does not extend above the shoulders, except for those who have professed religion. As far as possible avoid the costumes of your own day, unless they belong to the religious group just mentioned. Costumes of our own period should not be depicted unless it be on tombstones in churches, so that we may be spared being laughed at by our successors for the mad fashions of men and leave behind only things that may be admired for their dignity and beauty.

I remember, in my childhood, having seen with my own eyes, men both great and small, with all the edges of their garments scalloped at all points, head, foot, and side, and it even seemed such a fine idea at that time that they pinked the scallops. They wore hoods of the same fashion, as well as shoes, and scalloped cock's combs of various colours, which came out of the main seams of their garments. Furthermore, I saw the shoes, caps, purses, weapons, the collars of their garments, the edges of jackets reaching to the feet, the trains of their cloaks, and indeed everybody who would look well was covered up to the mouth with points of long, sharp scallops.

At another time the sleeves began to grow in size and they became so large that each one by itself was larger than the gown alone. Later, gowns began to rise above the neck, so much that they finally covered the whole head. Then, they began to take them away so that the clothes could not be held up by the shoulders because they did not hang from them. Afterward, garments began to

uestimenti, che al continuo gli huomini aueuano le braccia cariche di pāni, per non li pestare co' piedi; puoi uenero in tanta stremità, che uestiuano solamente fino à fianchi et alle gomita, et erano si stretti, che da quelli patiuano gran suplicio, e molti ne crepauano disotto. E li piedi si stretti, che le dita d'essi si sopra poneuano l'uno à l'altro et caricauansi di calli.

lengthen, so that men always had their arms full of their own clothes, in order not to tread on them with their feet. Later they reached such an extreme that men were clothed only as far as the flanks and the elbows, and were so tight that they suffered great torture, and many burst inside. The shoes were so tight that the toes were pushed over one another and became covered with corns.

c. 1492
CU f. 170r-170v / Ludwig 1882, no. 541.

McMahon 1956, no. 574.

9. De panni uolanti o' stabili

Li panni, di che son uestite le figure, sono di tre sorti, cioè, sotili, grossi, e mezzani; le sotili sono piu agili et atti à mouimenti; adonque, quando la figura corre, considera li moti d' essa figura, perche ella si spiegha hora à destra, hora à sinistra, et nel possare la gamba destra il pāno da quella parte s'alza da pie, reflettendo la percussione della sua onda; et in quel tempo la gamba, che resta in dietro, fa il simile col panno, che di sopra sè l'appoggia; et la parte dinanzi tutta con diuerse pieghe s'apoggia sopra il petto, corpo coscie e gambe, e di dietro tutto si scosta, saluo la gamba che resta in dietro. Et li pāni mezani fano menori mouimenti, et li grossi quasi niente, se gia il uento contrario al moto della figura nō l'aiuta à muovere.

9. Of draperies in motion or static

The draperies with which figures are clothed are of three sorts that is, thin, thick, and medium. Thin ones are lightest and liveliest in motion. Therefore when a figure is running, consider the motions of that figure, because it bends now to the right, now to the left. When it rests on the right foot, the drapery on that side rises from the foot, reflecting by its undulation the impact of the foot on the ground. At the same time, the leg behind relates in the same way to the drapery that rests upon it, while the part of the drapery in front presses, with diverse folds, upon the chest, body, thighs, and legs, and all the drapery flies back from the body, except from the leg that is back. Medium draperies show less motion and thick ones almost none, unless a wind contrary to the motion of the figure aids them to move.

Li stremi de panni, o' in alto o' in basso, secondo li piegamenti, e che s'acostino da piedi, secondo il possare, o' piegare, o' storcere, o' percuoterui dentro delle gambe, e che s'acostino, o' discostino alle gionture secondo il passo, o' corso, o' salto, o'uer che'l vento da se li percottesse, senza altro moto della figura. Et che le pieghe sieno acomodate alle qualità de panni trasparenti o' opachi.

The upper or lower ends of draperies follow the bending of the figure; toward the feet they are disposed according to whether the leg is straight, bending, twisting, or striking against them. They must approach or withdraw from the joints, in accordance with whether the figure is walking, running or jumping, or move without other motion of the figure when the wind itself strikes them. And the folds should be modified in accordance with the kinds of draperies, and whether these are transparent or opaque.

c. 1505-10
CU f. 168r-168v / Ludwig 1882, no. 535.

McMahon 1956, no. 567.

10. Dell'occhio, che uede pieghe de pāni che circondano l'huomo

L'ombre interposte infra le pieghe de panni circondatrici delli corpi humani sarano tanto piu oscure, quāto elle sono piu à riscontro all'occhio cole concauità, doue tale ombre son generate. E questo intendo hauer detto, quando l'occhio è situato infra la parte ombrosa e luminosa della predetta figura.

10. Of the eye which sees the folds of drapery that surround a man

The shadows lying between the folds of cloth surrounding human bodies will be the darker the more directly they are in front of the eye and opposite the concavities where such shadows are created. This applies to instances when the eye is situated in the centre, between the shadowed and the luminous sides of the aforementioned figure.

c. 1505-10
CU f. 170v / Ludwig 1882, no. 542.

McMahon 1956, no. 565.

11. Delle pieghe de panni
Sempre le pieghe de panni situate in qualunche atto delle figure debbono con suoi lineamenti mostrare l'atto di tale figura, in modo che non dieno ambiguità o' confusione della uera attitudine à chi le considera; et che nessuna piega co' la ombra della sua profondità tagli alcun' membro, cioè, che paia piu dentro la profondità della piega che la superficie del membro uestito; et che, se tu figuri figure uestite di piu uestimēti, che'l non paia, che l'ultima ueste rinchiuda dentro à se le semplici ossa di tal figura, ma le carne insieme con quelle, et li panni uestimento della carne, con tanta grossezza, qual si ricchiede alla multiplicatione de suoi gradi. Le pieghe de panni, che circondano le membra, debbono diminuire della loro grossezza inuerso li stremi della cosa circondata.

c. 1505-10
CU f. 170v-171r / Ludwig 1882, no. 543

11. Of the folds of draperies
Folds of cloth in any action of the figure ought always to outline its action so as not to cause ambiguity or confusion about the true attitude of the figure to anyone who sees it. No fold, with the shadow in its depths, should cut off any limb, that is, it should not seem that the depth of the fold is deeper than the surface of the clothed limb.

If you represent figures clothed in several garments, it should not appear that the topmost garment encloses within itself the stark bones of the figure, but covers the flesh as well, and the fabrics clothe the flesh with as much thickness as is required by the multiplication of layers. Folds of cloth that surround the body must decrease their thickness toward the extremities of the limb surrounded.

McMahon 1956, no. 570.

12. Delle pieghe
La lunghezza delle pieghe, che sono piu strette alle membra, debbono agrinzarsi da quel lato, ch'el membro per le sue pieghature diminuisce, e tirarsi dall'oposita parte d'essa pieghatura.

c. 1505-10
CU f. 171r / Ludwig 1882, no. 544.

12. Of folds
The length of folds that lie closest to the limbs should wrinkle on the side which is shortened by the bending limb, and stretch out on the side opposite to the bend.

McMahon 1956, no. 571.

13.
Mostrouso è quello che ha grande issimo capo e corte gambe, e mostruoso è quello che co' ricchi vestimenti possede gran povertà. Adunque diremo porpozionato esse[r] quello de lo quale le sue parte sono corrispondente a ['l] suo tutto.

c. 1508-13 (hand of a pupil or an associate)[3]
CA f. 1047r (f. 375r-b,c).

13.
Monstrous is that which has a huge head and short legs; and monstrous is that which with rich clothes is of great poverty; and thus we say that well-proportioned is that in which the parts are in correspondence with the whole.

London 2002b, p. 12.

14.
varieta nelle storie i panni sottjlj grossj novi vechi dj piege rotte o salde cride dolcj ōbrasti scuri e meno scuri refressi spedjti e cōfusi secōdo le djstātje e vari colori e abiti sēcōdo le qualjta vestite lūghi e cortj volātj e fermj secōdo li movimēti che si girano intorno alle figure che si suoltano e che saltino cō li stremj inalto ōin basso secōdo li piegamēti echessi acostino e discosstino da piedj secondo il posare o piegare o storcere percotervi dentro delle gābe che sacostino odjscostino o djscostino alle gunture

14.
Variety in the histories. Thin cloths, thick, new and old ones, with broken or solid plaits; soft accents(?), dark areas(?) obscure and less obscure; with or without reflections; defined or confused, according to the distances and the various colours; and garments, according to the rank of those who are wearing them; long and short, fluttering or stiff, conforming to the movements, such as encircle the figures; such as twist and flutter with ends streaming upwards or downwards according to the folds; and such as cling close about the feet

[3] For the attribution of the handwriting, see: Pedretti 1964, p. 65, note 74 (Salai); Clark and Pedretti 1968-69, vol. 3, p. 35, no. 19089 (Zoroastro or Lorenzo).

secōdo il passo ol moto ol vēto chessi figne e che le pieghe sieno acomodate alle qualita de pannj transparētj o hopachi.

[…]
deli pannj delle femjni sottili nellandare correre essaltare ellor uarieta
[…]
e in pittura fa djsscorso de panni e altre vestige

c. 1510
RL 19121 / Pedretti 1977, vol 1, p. 287-288.

or separate from them, according as the legs are shown at rest or bending or turning or pressing together within; either fitting closely or separating from the joints, according to the step or movements, or the wind which is feigned; and that the plaits be accommodated to the quality of the cloths, whether transparent or opaque.
[…]
Of the thin clothes of the women in walking, running and jumping, and their variety.
[…]
and in painting make a discourse on cloths and vestments

Pedretti 1977, vol 1, p. 287-288.

15. De panni che uesteno le figure
Li panni, che vesteno le figure, debbono mostrare d'essere habitati da esse figure. Con breue circuizzione mostrare l'attitudine e moto di tale figura, et fugire le confussioni di molte pieghe, et massime sopra i rilieui, acciocche sieno cogniti.

c. 1510-15
CU f. 167r / Ludwig 1882, no. 529.

15. Of draperies that clothe figures
Draperies that clothe figures should show that they cover living figures. Show the attitude and motion of such a figure with simple, enveloping folds, and avoid the confusion of many folds, especially over protruding parts of the body, so that these may be apparent.

McMahon 1956, no. 559.

16. Delle maniere rotte o'salde de panni che uestan le figure
Li panni, che vesteno le figure, debbono hauere le pieghe salde o' rotte secondo la qualità del panno sotile o' grosso, che tu uoi figurare;
e puoi usare nelli componimenti delle storie de l'una et de l'altra sorta, per satisfare à diuersi giudizi.

c. 1510-15
CU f. 167r / Ludwig 1882, no. 530.

16. Of draperies that clothe figures in much-folded or stiff manner
The draperies that clothe figures should have folds that are solid or broken according to the kind of fabric, be it thin or thick, that you would represent. You can use both sorts in the composition of narrative paintings, to satisfy various opinions.

McMahon 1956, no. 561.

17. Del uestire le figure con grazzia
Usa nelli tuoi panni che quella parte che circunda la figura, che la mostri il modo de l'atitudine sua; et quelle parti che restano fuori di quella, adornale à modo uolante e sparso, come si dirà.

c. 1510-15
CU f. 167r / Ludwig 1882, no. 531.

17. Of clothing figures gracefully
Practice the rule in painting your draperies of making the parts that cling to the figure show its manner of movement and attitude, and show those parts of the drapery which are not attached to the figure in a light, graceful manner, which will be described

McMahon 1956, no. 568.

18. De li panni che uestono le figure, et pieghe loro
Li panni, che uestano le figure, debbono hauere le loro pieghe acomodate à cingere le membra da loro vestite 'nmodo che nelle parte aluminate non si ponga pieghe d'ombre oscure, et nelle parte

18. Of the draperies that clothe figures, and their folds
Fabrics that clothe figures should have folds suited to gird the limbs clothed by them in such a way that folds with dark shadows are not placed on the illuminated sides and folds with too much

ombrose non si faccia pieghe di troppa chiarezza, e che li lineamenti d'esse pieghe uadino in qualche parte circondando le membra da loro coperte, e nō con lineamenti che taglino le membra, nō con ombre che sfondino piu dentro, che non è la superfittie del corpo uestito. E in efetto il panno sia in modo adattato che non paia disabitato, cioè, che non paia un gruppamento di panno spogliato da l'huomo, come si uede far à molti, li quali s'inamorano tanto delli varij agrupamenti de uarie pieghe, che n'empieno tutt' una figura, dimenticandosi l'effetto, perche tal panno è fatto, cioè per uestire e circondare con grazzia le membra, dou'essi si possano, e non empire in tutto di uentri o' uisciche sgonfiate sopra li rilieui aluminati de membri. Non nego già che non si debba fare alcuna bella falda; ma sia fatta in parte della figura, doue le membra infra essi e'l corpo racogliono et ragunano tal panno.

Et sopratutto uaria li panni nelle storie, com'è nel fare in alcuni le pieghe con rotture affacciate, e questo è ne' panni densi; et alcun panno abbia li piegamenti molli, e le loro uolte non laterate, ma curue, et questo a'cade nelle saie et rasse et altri panni rari, come tele, ueli e simili. Et farai ancora de panni di poche et gran' pieghe, come nelli panni grossi, come si uede nelli feltri e schiauine ed altri copertoi da letti.

Et questi ricordi non do'alli maestri, ma à quelli li quali non uogliono insegnare, che certo, questi non sono maestri, perché chi non insegna ha paura, che gli sia tolt' il guadagno, et chi stima el guadagno abbandona il studio, il quale si contiene nell'opere di natura, maestra de pittori, delle quali l'imparate si metteno in obliuione, e quelle, che nō sono stā imparate, piu non s'imparano.

c. 1510-15
CU f. 167r-167v / Ludwig 1882, no. 532.

brightness are not made on the shadowed sides. The outlines of folds should surround the limbs covered by them, but should not do so with outlines that cut the limbs nor with shadows that sink in farther than the surface of the clothed body. Indeed, the drapery should be arranged in such a way that it does not seem uninhabited; that is it should not seem simply a piling up of drapery as is so often done by many who are so much enamoured of groupings of various folds that they cover the whole figure with them forgetting the purpose for which the fabric is made which is, where possible, to clothe and surround gracefully slim limbs and not to cover illuminated projections of limbs with puffed up forms so that they resemble bladders. I do not deny that some handsome folds should be made, but let them be placed upon some part of the figure where they can be assembled and fall appropriately between the limbs and the body. Above all, diversify the draperies in narrative paintings; in some make the folds with smooth breaks, and do this with thick fabrics, and some should have soft folds with sides that are not angular but curved. This happens in the case of silk and satin and other thin fabrics, such as linen, veiling and the like. Also, make draperies with few but large folds in thick fabrics, such as are seen in felt, when used in capes and bed coverings.

These reminders I give, not to masters, but to those who do not wish to teach, who are certainly not masters, because whoever does not teach is afraid that he will be deprived of gain, and whoever esteems gain most abandons the study which is contained in the works of nature, teacher of painters; and what these have learned, they cast into oblivion, and what they have not learned by now they will not learn later.

McMahon 1956, no. 564.

19. Del modo del vestire le figure
Osserua il decoro, co' che tu uesti le figure secondol li loro gradi et le loro età. Et sopra'l tutto, che li panni non occupino il mouimento, cioè le membra, e che le dette membra non sieno tagliate dalle pieghe, nè dall'ombre de panni. Et imita quanto puoi, i greci e latini co'l modo del scoprire le membra quando il uento apoggia sopra di loro li panni; e fa poche pieghe, sol ne fa assai nelli huomini vechi togati e di autorità.

c. 1510-15
CU f. 167v-168r / Ludwig 1882, no. 533.

19. Of the way to clothe figures
Observe decorum in clothing your figures according to their station and their age. And above all, see that draperies do not conceal movement; and that the limbs are not cut off by folds nor by the shadows of folds. As much as you can imitate the Greeks and the Latins in the manner of revealing limbs when the wind presses draperies against them, and make few folds; make many folds only for old men in positions of authority who are heavily clothed.

McMahon 1956, no. 573.

Appendix 2: Expenses on dress in Leonardo's notebooks

A. A cloak for Salaì, 4 April 1497[1]

La cappa di Salai a dì 4 d'aprile 1497				Salai's cloak, 4 April 1497			
4 braccia di panno argiētino	l. 15	S	4	4 *braccia* of silver cloth	l. 15	S	4
velluto verde per ornare	l. 9	S		green velvet to trim it	l. 9	S	
bindelli	l.	S	9	binding	l.	S	9
magliete	l.	S	12	loops	l.	S	12
manifattura	l. 1	S	5	the making	l. 1	S	5
bindello per dināzi pūta	li	S	5	binding for the front stitching	li	S	5
ecco di suo grossoni 13 Salai ruba li soldi.	li 26	S	5	here are 13 *grossoni* of his Salaì steals the soldi.	li 26	S	5

B. Rose-coloured hose and shirts for Salaì, April 1503[2]

Ricordo come nel sopradetto giorno [dì 8 d'aprile] io rēdei a Salai ducati 3 d'oro, i quali disse volersene fare vn paio di calze rosate co'sua fornimēti, e li restai a dare ducati 9, posto che lui ne de' dare a me ducati 20, cioè 17 prestati a Milano e 3 a Venezia;

Memorandum. That on the same day [8 April 1503] I paid to Salaì 3 gold ducats which he said he wanted for a pair of rose-coloured hose with their trimming; and there remain 9 ducats due to him - excepting that he owes me 20 ducats, that is 17 I lent him at Milan and 3 at Venice.

Ricordo come io dieidi a Salai braccia 21 di tela da fare camicie, a S. 10 il braccio, la quale li diedi a dì 20 d'aprile 1503.

Memorandum. That I gave Salaì 21 *braccia* of cloth to make shirts, at 10 soldi the *braccio* which I gave him on the 20th day of April 1503.

C. Expenses on dress, June 1504[3]

pel giubone fiorino uno,
pel giubbone e per beretta fr. 2,
al calzaiolo fr. 1o

For a jerkin, 1 florin.
For a jerkin and a cap, 2 florins.
To the hosier, 1 florin.

[1] Paris MS Lf.94r. Transcription and translation: Richter, no. 1523.
[2] BL, f. 229v. Transcription and translation: Richter, no. 1523.
[3] CA, f. 71b. Transcription and translation: Richter, no. 1526.

Appendix 3: Florentine inventories and trousseaux

This appendix presents a selection of the Medici inventory of 1456 and three Florentine trousseaux dating from 1459 to 1501. Two of the trousseaux have not been published before. The documents regarding the Medici are published but are included here as key sources to this dissertation. The numeration has been added by the author.

A. Inventory of the Wardrobe of Lucrezia Tornabuoni, 1456[1]

On 15 September 1456 an inventory of Piero de' Medici's possessions was drawn up. The dresses of wife, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, formed a separate category. Her personal linens and jewels were listed among the general categories 'panni lini' and 'gioie et simile cose', and are therefore more difficult to distinguish.

Di Ma Lucretia

1. Una cioppa di velluto nero brocchata d'oro, foderata di zibellini
2. Una giornea di domaschino brocchato d'oro cremisi foderato d'ermellini
3. Una cioppa d'alto basso paghonazo, foderata di brochato verde
4. Una giornea di alto e basso cremisi foderata di dossi
5. Una giornea di domaschino nero foderata di taffecta di grana
6. Una cotta di zetani raso azurro brochato d'ariento con maniche d'argentera
7. Una cotta d'alto basso cremisi con maniche di brochato d'oro
8. Una cotta da fighurato con maniche di brochato d'oro
9. Una cioppa di saia milanese di grana foderata di brochato d'oro
10. Una cioppa rosata foderata di martore richamata
11. Una cioppa di panno nero foderata di velluto nero
12. Una gamurra rosata con maniche di zetani nero
13. Uno fodero di dossi di vaio

B. Counter-trousseau and trousseau of Bartolomea Dietisalvi, 1459[2]

In 1459 Bernardo di Stoldo Rinieri married Bartolomea di Dietisalvi Dietisalvi. Her dowry was 1,500 florins. In his ricordanze, Bernardo listed the wedding gifts and her trousseau.

[fol. 152]

Ricordo di più cose mandate a casa Dietisalvi di Nerone, per uso della Bartolemo mia donna, più fa.

1. j[a] Cioppa di domaschino chermisi ricamata con circa once iij ¼ di perle con maniche strette, la quale ricamò Nicolò di ... [illegible] ricamatore, con once 8¼ d'arienti dorato in sul busto. Apare a libro di ricordanze a c. 23.
2. j[a] Cotta di damaschino chermisi, con maniche broccate di domaschino chremisi e ricamata.
3. j[a] Tira da piè con arienti tristi, ricamò sopradetto Niccholò.
4. j[a] Cintola chermisi broccata, fornita d'ariento dorata.
5. j[a] Paio di Coltellini col frugatoio forniti d'ariento.
6. j[a] Brocchetta da spalla con 2 balasci e due perle lunghe.
7. j[a] Brocchetta da testa 4 perle e jo diamante punta in mezzo. Mutozzi il diamante in balsco.
8. Più fruscoli di perle d'once 5¼ in circa.
9. E 2 Catenuzze 2 Agnusdei d'oro per tenere al collo, recai d'Avignone.
10. E a'dì ... di luglio 1458, gli portrai j[o] frenello di perle pezi 274, ch'era alla Scarperia, che mi costò circa f. 96 s. 3 d. 2 a oro.
11. E a' dì xj d'ottobre gli portrai a casa perle 101, per fornire il frenello, e costoronmi f. 37. 18. 6 a oro.

[1] Cited from: Müntz 1888, p. 24.

[2] Bernardo's description of the stages of the wedding negotiations and the listing of his gifts have been published by: Badia 1896, p. 189-191. For Bartolomea's unpublished donora, see: ASF, Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal governo francese, 95, 212, fol. 154r.

12. E di vij di novembre, gli portrai once 22½ di perle per fare j[a] frenelluza per in sul capo e cotoronmi per f. 15 larghi f. 17. 4. 8 a oro.
13. E a dì detto, portai loro a casa once 5. d. ij di perle da ricamare, di pregio di f. 5 o in circha, che dissono per fare ricamare j[a] cioppa rosata e altro.
14. E a dì xx di dicembre, portai loro a casa, che le dettono a Bonifazio ricamatore, once 2 di perle, che disson per ricamare birette e altro, di pregio di 5 l'oncia.
15. E a dì detto portai loro a casa, fino a dì 23 passato, jo collare d'ariento dorato, chiovato, dentrovi più gioie et perle, costommi f. 150. Apare a questo c. 12.
16. E a dì xxij detto, ne portrai loro a casa perle oncia 1. d. 1., di pregio di f. 5 oncia.
17. E a dì viiij di gennaio, portai loro a casa once due di perle, mi costorono f. 11. Appare in q.o c. 18 in dì 11 detto.

[fol. 154] Richordo d[i]piu chose p[er] uso di vestire mandoro[no] q[uest]o alla si[a] mia donna dietisalvj
18. j[a] cioppa rosata ricamata le maniche et al busto d'arientj et perle / et delle perle erō mia
19. j[a] cioppa di mostavoliere richamata le maniche con ariento et algiuna perla
20. j[a] ciopetta di mormorino con lettere di perla
21. j[a] gornea drappa bianca
22. j[a] gornea a dbombassino colore [bi?/gri?]gia
23. j[a] chamurra paggonazo cōmaniche dbaldachino
24. j[a] drappa biancha
25. j[a] drappa drappa [sic]
26. jo fodero
27. jo chamurrino dbianch e ma[niche]
28. 3 paia di calze. 2 rosse et 1a paia colore ch[ermisi?]
29. j[a] cintola puntegato doro fornito dariento
30. j[a] cintoletta stretto rossea conariento
31. j[a] berettina di chermisi richamato donza perla
32. j[a] berettina d[i]domaschino bordato chermisi con perla dappiu
33. j[a] berettina d[i]domaschino biancho allauorato
34. j[a] berettina d[i]domaschino chermisi allauorato
35. 1o chapellina zetanj colore chermisi
36. j[a] chapellina zetanj colore pagonazo com arientj
37. j[a] chapellina zetanj colore allessandrino
38. 4 ..... [illegible]
39. j[a] anello dariento da chucire
40. 1 paniero datenere il seguito cōforbicj ..... [illegible]
41. 2 pettinj dauorio
42. 1o bossolo dappezie
43. j[a] tela d panno lino fino di braccia 70
44. 12 sciugatoj sottili
45. 12 chamicie foggetta [?] a indosso
46. 40 fazoletti
47. 40 benducci
48. 14 scuffie
49. 2 sciugatoj da fascia
50. 2 veletti
51. 1o fazoletto [added behind the 'veletti' and the 'fazoletto'] da portare in chapo
52. 2 sachetti da benducci
53. nastrj da bendarsi al chapo di piu ragioni
54. refe da chucire dpiu ragioni
55. 2 scatoline
56. j[a] zanellina drento dj piu spiletti
57. j[a] tafferia d legno biancha
58. 1o bacino da donna et 1a misciroba
59. 1o libricino da donna con 1o brancho d[i]perle
60. j[a] scatola d'abere lungo entrvj 1o banbino di queglj stanno infra glaltarij

C. Counter-trousseau and trousseau of Nannina de' Medici, 1466[3]

In 1466 Bernardo di Giovanni Rucellai married Nannina di Piero de' Medici with a dowry of 2,500 florins. The groom's father, Giovanni Rucellai, noted the expenses Bernardo made for the gifts to his bride and copied the inventory of the bride's trousseau in his Zibaldone.

La donna novella ebbe di mancia da Bernardo f.100 larghi e mani 100 di grossoni. [...] Alla donna novella si fè 2 vestimenti ricchi, 1 di velluto biancho ricamato di perle, seta e oro con maniche aperte foderate di lattizi di valuta di f. ... [left blank], e 1 di zetani vellutato alto e basso in 2 peli, molto riccho di pelo e di buono cholore (chostò f.7 ['l] braccio), foderato le maniche d'ermellini. E oltre a' due vestiri narrati di sopra, che si fè alla donna novella, ebbe 1 chotta di domaschino biancho brochato d'oro fiorito chon 1 paio di maniche di perle di valuta di f. ... [left blank], e 1 altra chotta di seta con maniche di brochato d'oro chermisi, e più altri vestimenti di cioppe e giornee di seta e di panno. Anchora ebbe 1 collana ricca con diamanti, rubini e perle di valuta di f.1200 larghi, e 1 brochetta di spalla con 1 grande balascio e perle che chostò f.1000 larghi, e 1 altra per in testa di valuta di f.300 larghi, e 1 vezzo al chollo di perle grosse chon uno grosso diamante punta per pendente di valuta ... [missing due to tear of the folio] che solo il diamante costò duchati 200, e 1 chapuccio richamato di perle ... [missing due to tear of the folio], 1 franello di perle grosse di valuta di f.500 larghi, due paia di chorna di f. 200 larghi ... [missing due to tear of the folio].

La dota fu f.2500, e tanti ne confessamo, cioè f.2000 sul monte e f.500 di donora, le quali donora costorono f.500, ma larghamente valevano f.1200. Furono molte belle e riche donora, come appresso si dirà, cioè:

1. 1 paio di forzieri colle spalliere, molti ricchi
2. 1 cioppa di panno paonnazzo rosina, richamata com perle
3. 1 giornea di raso allexxandrino, allucciolata con perle
4. 1 giornea di domasco biancho e chermisi con frangie e perle
5. 1 cioppa di mostavoliere, richamate le maniche di filo d'oro
6. 1 ghamurra paonnazza rosina con oro, ariento e perle
7. 1 chotta di zetani allexxandrino con maniche di brocchato
8. 1 ghamurra di panno biancho con maniche d'appicciolato
9. 1 saia di seta con maniche di domasco biancho e rosso
10. 1 ghamurra di panno paonazzo con maniche di seta e con ariento
11. 1 saia verde e nera a ucciellini, doppia fine
12. 20 braccia di panno lucchesino di grana largho, in pezza
13. 13 sciugatoi in uno filo e 1 pezza di panno lino sottile a braccia 4 e ½ di
14. panno lucchesino fine per 1 ghamurrino
15. 1 berretta di raso allexxandrino richamata a diamanti
16. 1 libriccino di Nostra Donna storiato con fornimenti d'ariento
17. 1 Bambino colla vesta di domasco richamata com perle.

Chose donate che non se contane:

18. 25 braccia di zetani velutato paonazo di chermisi
19. 22 braccia di domasco verde brocchato im pezza
20. 15 braccia di domasco allexxandrino brochato in pezza
21. 25 braccia di velluto chermisi spianato im pezza
22. 16 braccia di raso chermisi im pezza
23. 1 ¼ braccio di brocchato d'oro chermisi
24. 32 fazzoletti da mano fini in un filo
25. 30 fazzoletti da mano in un filo
26. 50 benducci da donna in un filo
27. 16 chamice di panno lino lavorate
28. 28 chuffie di panno lino lavorate
29. 6 testiere sottili di renso
30. 4 sacchettini con nappe
31. 7 pezzi di nastri di più ragioni
32. 12 braccia di bende fini
33. 2 taschettine di renso lavorate

[3] Cited from: Rucellai 1960, p. 32-34.

34. 2 sciuchatoi di fiore in un filo
35. 4 sciuchatoi da forzieri
36. 1 paio di ghanciali lavorati alla viniziana
37. 1 berretta richamata d'oro filato
38. 1 testiera richamata d'oro filato
39. 1 berretta richamata a fiordalisi
40. 1 chuffia di rete richamatacon ariento e perle
41. 1 berretta d'affichurato per la nocte
42. 1 berretta di domasco fiorito per la nocte
43. 3 chappelline di velluto e raso com perle
44. 1 Vergine Maria d'ariento dorato
45. 1 libriccino di Nostra Donna coperto di brochato
46. 1 filza di choralli con ariento e perle
47. 1 cintola chermisi brocchato
48. 1 borsa d'argenteria com perle e bottoni
49. 1 borsa alla viniziana di brochato
50. 4 aghoraiuoli a borsa richamati com perle
51. 8 pennaiuoli di più ragioni, 1 com perle
52. 2 anella da cucire, 1 d'oro e 1 d'ariento
53. 1 coppia di coltellini e 1 punteruolo forniti d'ariento
54. 1 choltellino e 1 forchetta forniti d'ariento
55. 1 paia di scharpellini d'ariento
56. 1 paio di scharpellini di ferro
57. 3 paia di forbici messe a oro
58. 2 chollarini di seta alla chatelana
59. 5 pettini d'avorio di più ragioni
60. 1 pennaiulo fornito di più chose
61. 4 paia di guanti di più ragioni
62. 2 setole belle
63. 1 chappello alla milanese con frange
64. 3 specchi di più ragioni
65. 8 paia di chalze da donna e a divisa
66. 2 paia di scharpette di velluto alla divisa
67. 2 forzerini d'avorio intarsiati
68. 1 bacino e 1 misciroba collo smalto d'ariento
69. 1 fazzoletto di renso com perle e ariento
70. 3 veletti di più ragioni
71. 1 fazzoletto con capi d'oro
72. 1 vezzo, cioè 6 perle
73. più refi d'ogni cholore
74. 1 giornea di saia biancha fine
75. 4 charte di spiletti
76. 1 rosta richamata
77. 1 sechiolina lavorata a Vinegia
78. 1 bugnolina fatta a Vinegia
79. più paneruzzole
80. 12 paia di chalze a divisa pe' famigli
81. 1 anello con 1 balascio per donare a mona Iacopa
82. 1 chrocetta con 4 rubini, 1 diamante
83. 12 perle per Paolo di Pandolfo
84. 5 cintole brocchate paonazze, 2 cintole brocchate azzurre, 4 cintole di domasco
85. brochato d' ariento per dare a'figluoli di Filippo e Donato Rucellai
86. 12 sciughatoi in uno filo per le serve

D. Trousseau of Chaterina Strozzi, 1504[4]

Chaterina Strozzi married Gino di Nero Capponi in January 1504 (Florentine year 1503). The inventory of her donora was noted on two loose sheets, that are now bound together with other Strozzi documents of various nature into a large volume.

Yhs addj viiij do^{mo} [?] 1503
Inventario delle donora datte ala Chaterina nostra sorela
et M[adonn]a a chasa In 4 zane et p[rim]a

1. 1a Roba di veluto tane con le mostre di martore con bottoni dargento
2. 1a Chotta di raso dore fornita di veluto alesandrino
3. 1a Chotta di domaschino biancho fornita di raso rosso
4. 1a Chotta di canbellotto sbiadatto fornita di raso tane
5. 1a Giachetta di tafetta sbiadatto fornito di veluto rosso
6. 1a Ciopa di pano luchesino fornitta di raso verde con bot[ton]i dargiento
7. 1a Cioppa di panno rossasecha chon mostre di martore e punte dargento
8. 1a Ciopa di pano mistio orlata di veluto tane
9. 1a Robetta di panno bigio fiandrescho
10. 1a Ghamura di pano paghonazo alargentto fornita di raso verde
11. 1a Ghamura di pano mistio con maniche di rasso alesandrino
12. 1a Bernia di pano paghonazo fornita di veluto tane
13. X Chamice di renso
14. XIIIJ Chamice di pano lino
15. XL fazolettj damano in 1o filo
16. [added in the right border] XXX fazoletti da mano in uno filo
17. [added in the right border] XVI fazoletti da spalle in' filo
18. IIIJ iscughatoi di rensa lavoratti da chasone
19. 1o Libricino da dona fornito dargento
20. 1o Bacino dargiento con larme de caponi e strozi
21. 1o Bochale overo me[sc]iroba dargiento

Tutte le soprascritte robe sono di stima
di β trecento Lira di grossi [?] β ccc^{o}

[fol. 129v] non stimate
22. Seghuita linventario di dette donora della chosa non
23. stimate etprima
24. 1o spechio di lengname intaglato mi[?]so doro con arme
25. II pettini grandi davorio
26. 1a Casetta dotto lavorata piena[?] opur soste profumi
27. 1a Casetta darcipresso
28. 1o Casettino darcipresso pieno di cordolino et frangi di seta et raso
29. 1a borsa di borchate [sic] doro tirata con nastri doro
30. 1a borsa di rasso rosso con trina doro e dargento con botto[ni] doro
31. II borse 1a di veluto et 1a di raso fornita di seta
32. II borsotti 1o di maglia e di veluto et 1o di drappo biancho e rosso
33. IIIJ sachetti di tafetta rossi et sbiadati forniti 2 doro et 2 di seta
34. II colaretti 1o di raso et 1o di tafetta fornitj doro
35. 1o capello di veluto tane et raso rosso et 1o nastro doro tirato
36. 1o paio di paternostri di diaspro con botto[ni] dargiento dorato
37. II paia di coltelini 1o p[ai]a dargiento con forchetta belli et 1o paia semplici[?]
38. II Cinti alesandrini compiuto dargiento dorato
39. IIII p[ai]a di calze pagonaze
40. II p[ai]a di pianella
41. IIIJ p[ai]a di scarpetta
42. 1a setola lavorata di setola [sic]

[4] ASF, Carte Strozziane, III serie 138, fols. 129r-130v. I am grateful to Laura Overpelt for her patient assistance in transcribing this document.

43. 1a Robetta azura buia orlata di veluto
44. 1a Cotta di cambelotto verde fornita di raso rosso
45. 1o Ghamurino di panno chapo dipichio[?]

Cose per donare
46. II paia di calze da famigli
47. II Cinti tane con punte dargento dorate
48. 1a borsa di veluto rosso
49. 1o borsotto richamato doro
50. IIIJ scugatoi da servi

[fol. 130r] non stimate
51. seguita linventtario di dette donora delle chosse on stimatte
52. VI fazoletti fini da capo
53. 1o Iscughatoio fino da chapo
54. II Grenbiuli di biso ecanabro chon renssa lavoratti
55. VI Grenbiuli di rensa[?] lavorati
56. IIII grembiuli di p[anno] lino
57. II fazoletti da spalla di rensa lavorati
58. 1o iscugatoio di fiore
59. II fazoletti grossetti da spalla in 1o filo
60. 1o iscughatoio da chapo grosso
61. XIIIJ pezette lavorate
62. IIII veli da chapo
63. 1a chufia di tafetta tane chon nastri doro tirato
64. II chufie di tafetta listato di levanto[?] con raso
65. VIII chufie di velutto di velutto [sic] di piu cholori fornito di raso
66. VI cufie di bisso 4 brontezza[?] et 2 con reticella
67. XII cufie di rensa lavorati tra di rensa di reticella
68. XII cufie di panno lino
69. IIII sachettj di panno lino lavorati
70. VIII paia di calcetti di panno lino
71. 1o fornimento di nastri larghi et stretti[?] di raso
72. XX veletti da chollo
73. 3 carte di spiletti
74. 2 torsilli di raso da spiletti
75. VII palle di raso di piu cholori
76. 1o [sic] paia di sproni dottone
77. V paia di guanti 1o paia in 1a noce
78. 1a paniera da cucire concerchio dipinto
79. 1o arazo et 4 gomitola di piu colori
80. II paia di forbice dorate
81. 1o p[aia] discharpe in jo b[er]sotto diraso fornito doro
82. II paniere di pagla 1a chon coperchio et laltra senzo
83. 1o anello da cucire dargiento
84. 1o capello di pagla con frange Viniziano

Appendix 4: Milanese trousseaux

This appendix presents three Milanese trousseaux dating around 1490. All documents have been previously published, but have been included as key sources for this thesis. The numeration has been added by the author.

A. Trousseau of Chiara Sforza, 14 March 1489[1]

Chiara Sforza was the illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza and Lucrezia Landriani. This inventory of jewels and clothing was drawn up in 1489 on the occasion of her second marriage with Fregosino da Campofregoso.

14 marzo 1489

1.	Primo gorzarino uno facto a litere F.C. in pezi septe de balassi pizieni de precio de ducati vinti el pezo …	ducati 140
2.	Balasso uno in mezo del dicto gorzarino da ducati octanta …	ducati 80
3.	Perle XVI nel suprascripto da ducati IIII el pezo …	ducati 64
4.	Item infra oro et manifactura ducati cento …	ducati 100
5.	Pendente uno cum uno balasso in tavola in mezzo, ponta una de diamante de sopra, perla una pendente in pero, de pretio de ducati due milia …	ducati 2000
6.	Gorzarino uno cum rose octo de rubini da ducati sextanta el pezo …	ducati 480
7.	Pezi nove de diamanti de pretio de ducati quaranta el pezo …	ducati 360
8.	Perle XVII de presio de ducati XVIII el pezo …	ducati 306
9.	Item per manifactura e oro ducati centrovintecinque …	ducati 125
10.	Firmalio uno cum ballasso uno in tavola de presio de ducati mille secento …	ducati 1600
11.	Perle due pendente da ducati trecento l'una …	ducati 600
12.	Smeraldo uno cum l'oro cum ducati cento …	ducati 100
13.	Fermalio uno cum [the word 'balasso' has been crossed through] uno zaffiro a quadri octo in mezo del dicto fermaio ducati seicento …	ducati 600
14.	Robino uno di sopra ducati cento cinquanta …	ducati 150
15.	Perla una pendente tonda ducati dusentocinquanta …	ducati 250
16.	Pezi dece de diamanti da parte facte in forma de corne de divitia ducati cento …	ducati 100
17.	Item per oro et factura ducati quaranta …	ducati 40
18.	Fremalio uno cum diamante uno in mezo facto a facette ducati ducento …	ducati 200
19.	Robino uno de sopra de pretio de ducati trecento cinquanta …	ducati 350
20.	Perla una pendente ducati centro cinquanta …	ducati 150
21.	Corona una de rubini et smeraldi de sopra cum oro ducati cinquanta …	ducati 50
22.	Fermalio uno cum diamante uno in tavola in mezo ducati quatrocento …	ducati 400
23.	Robino uno in tavola de sopra ducati ducento …	ducati 200
24.	Perla una pendente in pero ducati trecento …	ducati 300
25.	Item per oro et manifactura ducati vinticinque …	ducati 25
26.	Filo uno de perle numero quaranta de precio de ducati dece el perlo …	ducati 400
27.	Filo uno de perle de numero ducento et quindece ducati centocinquanta …	ducati 150
28.	Croseta una de diamanti de pezi vinte uno ducati sextanta …	ducati 60
29.	Iacynto uno ligato in uno filo cum una perla pendente ducati trenta …	ducati 30
30.	Balassi tre sopra una magnega in lavore de recame ducati sextanta el pezo …	ducati 180
31.	Albore uno in recamo allo dicta manega cum diamante uno a losenghe facte a facete ducati ducento …	ducati 200
32.	Desopra da dicto arbore diamante uno facto a facete ducati cento cinquanta …	ducati 150

[1] Rosina 1983, p. 65-67.

33.	Ponte una de diamante ducati cinquanta …	ducati 50
34.	Prelet re in radice del suprascripto arboro ducati XXel pezo …	ducati 60
35.	Perle sei nel suprascripto arbore de ducati doi el pezo …	ducati 12
36.	Item per l'oro et manifactura cum perle due pichole nel dicto arbore ducati quaranta …	ducati 40
37.	Roseta una de robini posta nel recame de dicta manega ducati sextanta …	ducati 60
	In la qual suprascripta manega sono anchora altre gioie ut infra in le zoie donate per il predicto illustrissimo Fregosino	
38.	Camaino uno ligato in annelo d'oro ducati quatro …	ducati 4
39.	Turchina una ligata in anello d'oro ducati cento …	ducati 100
40.	Rubino uno ligato ut supra ducati quaranta …	ducati 40
41.	Diamante uno in tavola ligato ut supra ducati XXV …	ducati 25
42.	Bacile tred i argento fino cum li soi bochali pesano al peso mantuano marche quaranta quatro e meza …	marche 44 ½
43.	Bacilo uno di argente de liga milanese pesa marche cinque e meza …	marche 5 ½
44.	Bochale uno de argento fino per la predicta bacile marche quatro …	marche 4
45.	Bochalino uno de argento fino marche tre, onze tre …	marche 3 onze 3
46.	Confetere due dorate cum li soi coperchi de argento fino marche vintitre e meza …	marche 23 ½
47.	Confectere tre grande cum li soi coperchi in parte dorate marche vintinove et onza una …	marche 29 onza 1
48.	Confectere due picole de argento fino cum li soi coperchi marche dece …	marche 10
49.	Confectera una picola de argento de liga cum el suo coperchio marche 4 onze due …	marche 4 onze 2
50.	Fructere due grande sopraaurate de argento fino de rilevo marche sei onze una …	marche 6 onza 1
51.	Fructere tre picenine de argento fino marche sei e meza …	marche 6 ½
52.	Vaselleti dui de argento fino sopra aurati marche tre onze due …	marche 3 onze 2
53.	Bussola una de argento fino marca una …	marche 1
54.	Piatelli quatro grandi d'argento de liga milanesa marche ventiquatro …	marche 24
55.	Scudelle dececepte d'argento ambrosino marche vintequatro …	marche 24
56.	Scudellini vintecinque d'argento ambrosino marche decesepte …	marche 17
57.	Quadri venteuno d'argento ambrosino marche vintedue …	marche 22
58.	Taza una d'argento ambrosino onze sette e meza …	onze 7 ½
59.	Salini tri d'argento de liga onze sei …	onza 6
60.	Candelleri tri de argento fino marche sette onza una …	marche 7 onza 1
61.	Chuchiari dece nove et forcelle due grande d'argento de Milano marche tre e meza …	marche 3 ½
62.	Sedelino uno cum la sua asperges marche tre …	marche 3
63.	Mongino uno de brochato d'oro rizo de cremesino	
64.	Mongino uno de brochato d'oro piano facto a leoni cum le rechie cum la [the letters 'go' have been crossed through] coda longa	
65.	Mongino uno de brochato d'oro in bianco	
66.	Mongino uno de brochato d'oro in celestre	
67.	Camora una de brochato d'oro in bianco	
68.	Camora una de brochato d'oro in cremesino	
69.	Mantellina una de brochato d'argento in celestre	
70.	Mantellina una de brochato d'oro in cremesino cum la coda	
71.	Mongino uno de veluto cremesino cum la coda longa	
72.	Mongino uno de veluto morello	
73.	Mongino uno de veluto verde	
74.	Mongino uno de veluto celestre	
75.	Mongino uno de zeronino [sic] turchino	
76.	Turcha una de zambelloto biancho	
77.	Mantellina una de zetonino cremesino cum la coda longa	
78.	Mantellina una de tabi incarnato	
79.	Mantellina una de pello de lione	
80.	Camora una de veluto cremisino cum la balsana de brochato d'oro cremesino	

81. Camora una de veluto morello cum la balsana de brochato d'oro cremesino
82. Camora una de tabi de pello de lione cum la balsana de brochato d'oro
83. Camora una de veluto verde
84. Camora una de damascho bianco
85. Camora una de zetonino turchino
86. Camora una de veluto negro
87. Coreze due de brochato d'oro larghe et longhe fornite de argento deaurato
88. Coreze due di brochato d'argento larghe et longhe fornite ut supra
89. Coreze due di brochato d'oro curte alla francesa fornite ut supra
90. Coreza una de damasco morello larga et curta fornita ut supra
91. Corezini cinque forniti
92. Corezino uno [the addition 'd'oro' has been crossed out] negro fornito d'oro
93. Lecti XVIII cum li piumazi et sue coperte et tre copertori di pelle et cum li piumazoli sive cossini quali tuti insieme possono essere pesi cento et cinquanta
94. Capecielo uno vecchio di veluto cremesino cum la coperta da lecto de veluto cremesino
95. in summa pezi tre
96. Capecielo uno de pano de razo cum la sua coverta pezi tre
97. Capecielo uno de bombasina biancha
98. Moscheto uno de tella biancha
99. Coperta una de veluto cremesino et biancho
100. Para cinquanta de lenzoli
101. Proponta una da lecto de zendale cremisino frusta
102. Coperta una picola de veluto verde
103. Proponte cinque da lecto bianche
104. Coperte sei di pano di raza da lecto
105. Spaliere tre de pano di raza
106. Tapeto uno grande da tovola
107. Cavezi cento de tela tra sutile e grossa
108. Braza ducento de mantili
109. Braza quaranta de tella da reno
110. Braza centovintecinque di tovaglie
111. Braza ducento di paneti
112. Braza quaranta de sugacapi de lino
113. Para octo di fodrete lavorate intorno de oro
114. Para dodece de fodrete bianche
115. Lenzoli tre lavorati da mettere sopral i lecti
116. Braza quaranta di tovaglie da fameglia
117. Cadrieghe due coperte di pano d'oro
118. Cadrieghe tre picole da dona coperte di veluto
119. Cadrieghe tre da dona coperte di coyro
120. Scagni doi coperti di drapo de argento
121. Casse vinteocto depincte da cariagio
122. Cadrieghe due grande coperte di veluto cremesino
123. Cadriega una grande coperta di veluto verde
124. Cunque etiam predicta illustrissima domina Clara habeat ultra suprascripta bona, que propria ipsius erant et que ad maritum detulit , etiam alia infrascripta bona que sibi donata fuerunt per prefatum illustrissimum comitem Fregosinum videlicet:
125. Filo uno de perle de numero trecentodecesette de valuta de ducato uno el pezo monta ducati trecento et desette … ducati 317
126. Recamo uno de perle sopra a una manegha de la quale sopra se fa mentione in la manegha del recamo del arbore pono essere da once trentasei in quaranta che valeno ducati dece per onza sono ducati quatrocento … ducati 400
127. Perle sesantasepte de la sorte de le suprascripte 317 a ducato uno el pezo monta ducati sesantasepte … ducati 67
128. Perle decenove de carrati tre el pezo a ducati octo l'una ducati cento

	cinquantadui …	ducati 152
129.	Perle quatro de carratti dodece in quatordece el pezo sopra el predicto recamo, ducati cento el pezo montano ducati quatrocento …	ducati 400
130.	Perle una de carratti vintecinque vel circha ducati 300 …	ducati 300
131.	Rosette due di robino a ducati sesanta el pezo valente ducati centovinte …	ducati 120
132.	Robino uno in tavola cum perle quatro da parte de carratti quatro el pezo ducati setanta …	ducati 70
133.	Smeraldi quatro in tavola nel suprascripto recamo ducati quindeci el pezo, ducati sesanta …	ducati 60
134.	Smeraldo uno quadro facto a facete ducati vinti quale nove poste suprascripte sone insiema in la manegha et recamo suprascripto …	ducati 20
135.	Perla una ligata in annello de carratti septe et uno terzo ducati cento cinquanta …	ducati 150
136.	Smeraldo uno ligato in annello ducati quatrocento …	ducati 400
137.	Diamante uno in tavola uno pocho longheto ligati ut supra vale ducati ducento et cinquanta …	ducati 250
138.	Diamante uno squadro ligato in annello ut supra ducati quattrocento … ducati 400	
139.	Diamante uno a losenghe facto a facete ducati cinquecento …	ducati 500
140.	Robino uno ligato in annello ut supra ducati sesanta …	ducati 60
141.	Perla una in pero de carrati vinte uno de presio de ducati mille …	ducati 1000
142.	Robino uno in tavola de precio de ducati quatrocento …	ducati 400
143.	Collana una de oro facta a tronchoni pesa onze vinte nove de oro de ducati … [*sic*]	ducati
144.	Mazo uno de cadenelle de oro in collana de volte cinquantaquatro pesa onze quaranta d'oro de carati vintidui …	ducati [*sic*]
145.	Bacile uno cum il suo bochale de argento cioe il bacile de argento de liga et dicto bochale de argento fino pesa marche dodece …	marche 12
146.	Cope quatro de argento fino cum li soi coperchi tutti deaurati pesa in tutto marche dodece e meza …	marche 12 ½
147.	Taze sei d'argento fino smaltate marche sette e meza …	marche 7 ½
148.	Forcellete sesantasei d'argento de liga et parte fine marche sei et onze due …	marche 6 onze 2
149.	Chuchiaro dodese de argento de liga marche due …	marche 2
150.	Salini tre d'argento de liga marche una …	marche 1
151.	Mongino uno de brochato d'oro negro facto a lupi con la coda	
152.	Camora una de brochato d'oro in verde	
153.	Mongino uno di brochato d'oro in biancho	
154.	Mongino uno de brochato d'argento in negro facto a lupi cum la coda	
155.	Turcha una de veluto di pelo de leone	
156.	Camora una de veluto di pelo de leone	
157.	Camora [the word 'de' has been crossed through] una de damasco cremesino cum la balzana de brochato d'argento cremesino	
158.	Capecielo uno de zettonino cremesino recamato cum le sue bande et coperta peze quatro et coltrine due de zendalo cremesino	

B. Trousseau of Cecila Gallerani, 27 July 1492[2]

In 1492 Cecilia Gallerani was married off to count Bergamino, after she had been Ludovico Sforza's mistress for several years. The hand writing and the size of the paper corresponds with inventories from the Registri Ducali Sforzeschi. The final part of the inventory is lost.

1492 die veneris vigesimo septimo julii
Inventario de vestimente de la magnifica madonna Cecilia

1. In primis. Una sbernia de panno negro fodrata de brocato d'oro beretino

[2] Rosina 1983, p. 67-68.

2. Sbernia una de raso beretino fodrata de cendale negro cum una balzana de telo d'oro in cerco lavorata cum cordoni de seta negra
3. Una sbernia de tabi d'oro verde fodrato de cendale cremisi cum una balzana de velluto cremisi in cerco
4. Una sbernia de velluto negro fodrata de cendale morello cum una balzana d'oro tirato bellissima
5. Una sbernia de raso negro fodrata de cendale verde
6. Una sbernia de damaschino cremesino fodrata de cendale cangiante cum groppi de bindelli negri in cerco
7. Una sbernia de raso cremisi fodrata de cendale negro cum uno lavoretto de velluto negro in cercho
8. Una sbernia de scarlatto cum una balzana de velluto negro in cerco
9. Una sbernia de terzanello negro fodrata de cendale negro
10. Una sbernia di tabi biancho fodrata de cendale cremisi cum una balzana di velluto cremisi facta a zifre et rose lavorata cum cordoni d'oro
11. Una sbernia de brocato d'argento negro fodrata de cendale morello cum una balzana de velluto morello in cercho
12. Una sbernia de damascho biancho fodrata de cendale negro cum una balzana de velluto negro in cerco
13. Una sbernia de tabi alistata de diversi colori fodrata de cendale negro
14. Una sbernia de raso verde fodrato de cendale negro cum una balzana de velluto negro cerco
15. Una sbernia de raso turchino fodrata de cendale negro cum uno lavoretto d'oro e arzento filato in cerco
16. Una camora de velluto negro et brocato d'oro verde alistata, e tanto è lo velluto como lo brocato
17. Una camora de tabi negro cum una balzana de velluto morello in cerco facta alla divisa del fanale
18. Una camora de de velluto morello
19. Una camora de raso verde tutta lavorata a groppi d'oro et de seta rossa e negra
20. Una camora facta a liste de raso cremisi et raso bianco cum groppi d'oro e d'argento filato alle cusiture
21. Una camora de damaschino negro cum una balzana de velluto beretino in cercho
22. Una camora de panno morello cum una balzana grande facta a groppi d'oro in cerchoet così listata cum quatro liste al le maniche alla foza soprascripta
23. Una camora de scarlatta cum una balzana de velluto negro in cercho
24. Una camora de raso cremisi fodrata de cendale negro cum una balzanad'oro filato in cerco e medisima balzana alle cusiture
25. Una camora de tabi alistata de diversi colori
26. Una camora de tabi beretino cum balzana de velluto cremesino in cerco
27. Una camora de zetonino leonato scuro cum una frappa de velluto morello
28. Una camora de velluto cremisi cum una balzana de tabi d'oro verde in cerc
29. Una camora de raso morello fodrata de cendale cangiante
30. Una camora de tabi morello cum una frappa di brocato d'oro bianco perfilata de cordonzelli de seta negra
31. Una camora de tabi verde
32. Una camora de tabi alistata gialdo e negro
33. Una camora de tabi cangiante gialdo e turchino cum una frappa de velluto morello
34. Una camora de tabi incarnato cum una frappa de velluto negro
35. Una camora de brocato d'arzento cremisi
36. Una camora de brocato d'oro morello
37. Una camora de brocato d'oro bianco
38. Una camora de terzanello cremisi
39. Una camora de terzanello negro
40. Una camora de terzanello morello cum uno paro de maniche de brocato d'oro negro
41. Una camora de adamaschino bianco cum una frappa de velluto negro cum uno paro de maniche facte a guchia d'oro e arzento fodrate de raso negro
42. Una camora de raso turchino fodrata de cendale negro
43. Una camora de terzanello cremisi cum uno bindello d'oro in cerco, cum uno paro…

C. Trousseau of Bianca Maria Sforza, 28 November 1493[3]

Bianca Maria Sforza married Maximilian I in December 1493. Her trousseaux was unrivalled in its richness.

Inventario de zoie, argenti, paramenti, veste, drapamenti et tapezarie quale se dano alla Serenissima Madona Bianca sopra la dote, videlicet:

1.	Primo una collana facta alla divisa de le semprevive cum sei balassi grossi, dentro diamanti vintiquatro de dverse sorte, smeraldi sei, perle 14 grosse, et perle trentasei minore, vale	d. 9000
2.	Item uno zoiello cum uno smeraldo tavola bellissimo, uno robino tavola bellissimo de sopra, un altro robino de sotto triangulo, et una perla grossa pendente bellissima, ligato in dui corni de dinitia, cum una corona de sopra, quali corni et corona sono facti de diamanti numero quarantasei, et epso zoiello ha attachato uno filo de perle trenta, vale	d. 6300
3.	Item una zoiello facto cum la divisa del faciolo, cum uno balasso grande tavola, cum uno diamante grosso a faceto de sopra, et una perla grossa pendente, vale	d. 4000
4.	Item uno zoiello cum uno smeraldo grande tavola dentro, uno robino bono de sopra, et doe bone perle pendente, vale	d. 3000
5.	Item uno zoiello cum uno diamante grosso a faceto, uno robino in forma de core bellissimo, doi diamanti in ponta, et una perla grossa pendente, vale	d. 3000
6.	Item uno Iesus de diamanti numero cinquantacinque, cum tre perle pendente, cioè due tonde et una pera bella, vale	d. 1200
7.	Item uno zoiello cum una granata soriana a 8 cantoni ligata nel leone de le sege, cum dui diamanti in punta de sopra, et tre perle pendente, una pera et due tonde, el quale zoiello è da portare nel capello, vale	d. 1000
8.	Item uno zoiello facto in forma de brustia, cum el manico facto de uno rubino, una turchesa de sopra intaliata, et uno smeraldo in cima a faceto in forma de core, et le sete de diamanti 9, et cinque perle tonde pendente, et da roverso uno L de diamanti, vale	d. 600
9.	Item una rosetta cum diamanti X in mezo, rubino XV in circo, smeraldini 5, rubino uno picolo nel mezo, perla una peretta pendente, cum una chatena d'oro attachata, vale	d. 200
10.	Item perle numero centosexanta grosse in un filo, valeno	d. 640
11.	Item perle numero centoseptanta octo, più grosse de le soprascripte in uno filo, valeno	d. 1780
12.	Item perle cinquecento quaranta octo, in uno filo minore de le suprascripte, valeno	d. 548
13.	Item perle numero septanta in uno filo, valeno	d. 105

Argenti per la credentia, videlicet

14.	Primo. Bacille due grandi, cum li soi bochali, che pesano	onze 219
15.	Bacille due mezane, cum li soi bochali, che pesano	oz. 191½
16.	Confectere 4 coperte che pesano	oz. 247
17.	Piatelli quatro grandi che pesano	oz. 243
18.	Piatelli quatro mezani che pesano	oz. 160
19.	Piatelli quatro picoli che pesano	oz. 98
20.	Scutelle XXIIIJ che pesano	oz. 333
21.	Scutellini XXIIIJ che pesano	oz. 197½
22.	Quadri trentasei che pesano	oz. 533½
23.	Taze XXIIIJ che pesano	oz. 340
24.	Ovaroli doi che pesano	oz. 12½
25.	Bussule due da specie che pesano	oz. 17¼
26.	Sedella una coperta che pesa	oz. 130
27.	Bacille uno da capo, che pesa	oz. 108
28.	Aramina una che pesa	oz. 80
29.	Candellieri octo che pesano	oz. 200

[3] Calvi 1888, p. 131-147. A second version of this inventory, written in Latin, is published by: Ceruti 1875, p. 60-74.

30. Salini 8 che pesano oz. 26½
31. Due cortellere cum li suoi cugiali forniti de argento oz. 27¾
32. Uno scaldaletto d'argento che pesa oz. 71
33. Uno orinale de argento che pesa oz. 15¼

Argenti per la capella
34. Primo: uno calice cum la patena dorato, pesa oz. 27
35. Una croce dargento sopradorata oz. 40½
36. Una pace che pesa oz. 13¼
37. Una bacilleta cum li soi bochalini, che pesano oz. 23
38. Candellieri quattro pesano oz. 55
39. Sedelino uno da acquasanta cum l'asperges, pesa oz. 26
40. Bussola da hostie, pesa oz. 9¼
41. Uno missale fornito de argento
42. Uno officiolo de nostra Dona, cume le asse d'argento
43. Uno breviario fornito d'argento

[added in the right border next the three items listed above:] In tota somma sono onze de argento 3444¾, et vale tanti ducati d'oro

Paramenti per la capella
44. Una pianeta de brocato d'oro cilestro cum la sua croxeta de brocato d'oro cremexile, cum le arme de recamo.
45. Un'altra pianeta de raso alexandrino, cum la croxeta de brocato et le arme de recamo.
46. Una pianeta de raso morello, cum la croxeta de brocato et le arme recamate.
47. Una pallio de brocato d'oro cilestro, cum lo frontale de brocato d'oro cremexile, cum le arme et franze sue.
48. Uno pallio de raso morello, cum le francie et arme.
49. Uno pallio de raso alexandrino, cum le franze et arme.
50. Camixi tri cum tre amiti, uno fornito de brocato d'oro, uno de raso morello, et l'altro de raso alexandrino.
51. Cordoni 3
52. Stolle 3 et manipuli tri cum li suoi fornimenti.
53. Cossini tre de altare per lo missale.
54. Una capsa de brochato per li corporali.
55. Tovalie tre.
56. Mantili quatro.
57. Facioli tri.
58. Uno sediale de veluto cremesino, cum uno sparavero de sendale de sopra.
59. Par uno de capse per gubernare tuti li antedicti et suprascripti fornimenti de capella.

Vestimenti, videlicet.
60. Vestito uno de raso cremesino recamato cum una balzana de raso turchino recamata, et sopra el busto 80 zoielli picoli, cum uno robino et quatro perle per ciascuno.
61. Camora una de brocato d'oro morello rizo, cum la divisa del Fanale.
62. Camora una de brocato d'oro rizo verde, cum le uve de argento
63. Un'altra camora de brocato d'oro rizo verde facta ad foliame.
64. Camora una de tabi bianco recamata ad cordoni d'oro,
65. Camora una de raso turchino, cum la balzana et liste racamata d'oro et argento.
66. Camora una canginate de tabi, cum le frappe de veluto nigro.
67. Camora una compartita, cum brocato d'oro verde et dalmasco cremesino.
68. Camora una compartita, cum brocato d'oro nigro et raso beretino.
69. Camora una de brocato d'oro dalmasco turchino, cum la balzana de veluto cremesino.
70. Camora una de scarlata, cum le frappe de veluto verde.
71. Camora una de veluto cremesino, cum la balzana de raso beretino.
72. Camora una de veluto morello, cum la balzana de tilla d'oro.
73. Camora una de veluto verde, cum la balzana de raso cremesino.
74. Camora una de veluto turchino, cum la balzana de raso nigro,
75. Camora una de dalmaso cremesino, cum la balzana de brocato d'oro bianco.
76. Camora una de dalmasco morello, cum la balzana de brocato d'oro nigro.

77. Camora una de tabi verde sambucato, cum la balzana de veluto cremesino.

Sbergne, videlicet.
78. Sbergna una de brocato d'oro cremesino foderata de dossi.
79. Sbergna una de tabi biancho, cum la balzana d'oro in circo recamata.
80. Sbergna una de raso cremesino, cum la balzana d'oro in circo recamata.
81. Sbergna una de brocato d'oro rizo, fodrato de sibilline.
82. Sbergna una de veluto cremesino fodrata de gati spangoli.
83. Sbergna una de veluto verde sambucato, fodrato de sendale.
84. Sbergna una de raso turchino, cum uno lavoro d'oro in circo.

Tavardette, videlicet.
85. Tavardetta una de raso incarnato, fodrata de sendale.

Roboni, videlicet.
86. Robono uno de brocato d'oro cilestro, fodrato de armelino.
87. Robono uno de veluto nigro fodrato, de fianchi de lupo cernesi.
88. Robono uno de raso cremesino, fodrato de sendale.

Cappe, videlicet.
89. Cappa una de scarlatta, cum lo capino de brocato d'oro.
90. Cappa una de zambelloto cremesino.

Turche, videlicet.
91. Turcha una da nocte de veluto cilestro, fodrata de fianchi de lupi cervasi.

Ciniti, videlicet.
92. Uno zinto d'oro et de argento tirato
93. Doi cinti de raso verde recamati d'oro
94. Doi cinti de raso recamati d'oro
95. Doi altri cinti de raso recamati d'oro
96. [added in the right border next to the four items listed above] cum li soi fornimenti di argento sopra dorati

Recatini, videliect.
97. Recatino uno d'oro d'argento tirato
98. Recatino uno d'oro lavorato cum li soi ferri d'oro
99. Recatino uno facto a goge
[added in the right border next to the three items listed above] cum li suoi fornimenti d'oro

Calze, videlicet.
100. Para 24 de calze de scarlato.

Pianelle, videlicet.
101. Pianelle para 24 de brocato et veluto de diversi colori, con li fornimenti de argento lavorati ad la paravesina.

Scarpe, videlicet.
102. Para XXIIIJ de scarpe de seta, cioè veluto dalmasco et raso

Crespine et scuffie d'oro et argento et seta, videlicet.
103. Una crespina d'oro et argento facta a groppi, cum fiocheti de seta morella et incarnata.
104. Crispina una d'oro et argento facta a groppi, cum seta cremesina et beretina.
105. Crispina una d'oro et argento facta a groppi.
106. Crispina una d'oro a groppi, cum fiocheti de velo verde et seta cremesina, cum el lavoro in circo d'oro et argento.
107. Crispina una d'oro et argento, cum fiocheti de seta verde et nigra.
108. Crispina una d'oro et argento.

Scuffie de veli de più colori recamate d'oro, videlicet.

109. Una scufia de velo cilestro, recamata d'oro et d'argento a groppi et foliamini.
110. Una scuffia de velo leonato, recamata a rosette d'oro et argento cum sete de più colori.
111. Una scuffia de velo morello recamata a groppi d'oro e rosette d'argento.
112. Una scuffia de velo verde recamata a zifre, et uno ligato d'oro cum uno frixeto in circo d'oro et argento.
113. Una scufia de velo gialdo recamata cum uno ligato d'oro, et cum uno frixeto d'oro et argento in circo.
114. Una scuffia de velo nigro, cum uno ligato d'oro et argento recamato, cum uno frixo in circo d'oro et argento cum seta cremesina facta a rosette.
115. Uno trenzato d'oro.

Gorghere, videlicet.

116. Primo. Una Ghoghera de velo turchino, cum el lavore d'oro et argento recamata.
117. Una Gorghera de velo nigro, recamata d'oro et argento.
118. Una Gorghera de velo nigro recamata d'oro et argento, cum fiochetti de seta cremesina.
119. Una Gorghera de velo turchino, recamata cum oro et argento.
120. Una Gorghera de velo morello, cum uno ligato d'oro et argento.
121. Una gorghera de velo morello recamata d'oro.

Gorghere de cendale.

122. Primo. Una gorghera de cendale cremesino, recamata cum uno fogliame d'oro et argento et de seta verde.
123. Una gorghera de sendale verde, recamata a columbine d'argento, et uno ligato d'oro et seta cremesina.
124. Una gorghera de sendale cangiante verde et cremesino, cum rosette d'oro et argento seta cremesina et turchina recamata.
125. Una gorgera de sendale cremesino recamata, cum uno ligato d'oro et argento.
126. Una gorghera de sendale cangiante cremesino et verde, cum uno lavoro d'oro perfilato de seta verde.
127. Una gorghera de sendale verde, cum uno lavoro d'oro et argento.

Lenze, videlicet.

128. Una lenza d'oro et seta nigra.
129. Una lenza d'oro et seta cremesina.
130. Una lenza d'oro et seta morella.
131. Una lenza d'oro et seta nigra.
132. Una lenza d'oro et seta cremesina.
133. Una lenza d'oro et seta morella.

Paramenti, videlicet.

134. Primo. Paramento uno da lecto de brocato d'oro cremesino, cioè capocello, testale et cooperta bellissima, cum quatro pezi de carlanda in circo d'epso brocato, et tre copertine de cendale verde.
135. Paramento uno de raso cremesino, cioè capocello, testale et coperta cum le franze in circo de seta.
136. Paramento uno per una lectera da campo de damalschino bianco et morello, cum la divisa de la columbina, cioè capocello testale et coperta, cum le soe copertine de sendale in circo bianco et morello, et la sua lectera cum li soi doi mattaracij, doi bastoni et doi valisoni.
137. Una coperta de cendale cremesino grande.
138. Un alrta coperta de cendale cremesino picola.
139. Un altra coperta de cendale cremesino per la soprascripta lectarola da campo.

Drapamenti et Sparaveri de Cambraia lavoarta d'oro et argento.

140. Primo. Sparavero uno de tela de cambraia, cum le liste d'oro et argneto larghe, cum alcune rosette de seta lavorate agogie bellissime, cum la porta d'oro et seta lavorata ad tellaro, cum una franzeta in circo d'oro et seta cremesina, et cum el suo pomo dorato et suo cordone de seta di attacarlo alla sforzesca.
141. Sparavero una de tela de Cambraia, cum le liste de riza cremesina et turchina lavorate ad tellaro, cum una franzeta, uno pomo et uno cordone de seta como el soprascripto.

142. Sparavero uno de tela de cambraia cum le liste d'oro et seta cremesina, facto a tavelle larghe cum la porta d'oro et sette lavorate ad tellaro, cum una franzeta, uno pomo, et uno cordone de seta como el soprascripta.

Lenzoli de Cambraia.

143. Lenzolo una de tela de Cambraia, cum le liste d'oro et argento larghe, cum alcune rosette de seta lavorate a goge bellissime, cum la franzeta intorno d'oro et de seta cremesina.
144. Lenzolo uno de tela de Cambraia, cum leliste de riza cremesina et turchina larghe, lavorate d'oro et argento, cum una franzeta intorno d'oro et de seta cremesina.
145. Lenzolo uno de tela Cambraia, cum le liste d'oro et seta cremesina facte a tavelle larghe, cum una franzeta in circo d'oro et seta cremesina.

Fodrette de Cambraia

146. Primo. Paro uno de fodrette de Cambraia, facte ad homini et animali lavorati de recamo subtilissimamente, cum li fiochi facti alla divisa del Leone, cum le sege d'oro tirato.
147. Par uno de fodrette de tela de Cambraia, lavorate a tellarolo d'oro tirato, alla divia del phenice bellissime, cum li soi fiochi d'oro tirato bellissimi.
148. Par uno de fodrette de velo verde et leonato recamate d'oro et argento subtilissimamente, in circo un lavore facto a groppi d'argento.
149. Par uno de fodrette de velo ut supra, recamate subtilissimamente nel modo et forma suprascripta.
150. Par uno de fodrette de tela de Cambraia, cum el suo lavore a circo d'oro et de seta, lavorato al tellaro larghe.
151. Par uno de fodrette de tela de Cambraia, cum lo lavore facto a groppi d'oro et seta cremesina.
152. Par uno de fodrete de tela de Cambraia, cum uno lavore facto a tavola d'oro et seta cremesina.
153. Par uno de tela de Cambraia, cum uno lavore d'oro et seta nigra facto al tellaro.
154. Par uno de fodrette de tela de Cambraia, cum uno lavore d'oro et seta morella facto a tavelle.
155. Par uno de fodrette de tela de Cambraia,, cum uno lavore facto a tavelle d'oro et seta Cremesina.

Camise de Cambraia, videlicet.

156. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum le maniche larghe fin in terra, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta verde.
157. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta cremesina.
158. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta nigra.
159. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta morella.
160. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta verde.
161. Camia una de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori facti a groppi d'oro et seta nigra.
162. Camise due de Cambraia.

Drappi de Cambraia grandi et piccoli, videlicet.

163. Drappo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, lavorato da li capi a groppi d'oro argento et seta cremesina, cum le sue franze d'oro, et da li canti uno lavoro stricto d'oro.
164. Drapo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, lavorate da li spai a groppi d'oro argento et seta verde, cum le sue franze d'oro argento et da li canti uno lavoro stricto d'oro.
165. Drapo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, lavorato de li capi a groppi d'oro et argento, cum le sue franze d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro stricto d'oro.
166. Drapo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, cum uno lavoro da li capi a groppi d'oro seta verde et cremesina, facto a tellaro cum le sue franze d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro stricto d'oro.
167. Drapo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, lavorato a groppi d'oro argento et seta cremesina, cum le sue franze d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro stricto d'oro.
168. Drapo uno grande de tela de Cambraia, cum uno lavore da li capi d'oro et seta morella, facto a tellaro cum le franze d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro stretto.
169. Drapo uno picolo de tela de Cambraia, lavorato da li capi a groppi d'oro et argento, cum le franze sue d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro stritto d'oro.
170. Drapo uno picolo de tela Cambraia, lavorato da li capi a groppi d'oro et seta cremesina, cum le franze d'oro et da li canti uno lavoro strecto d'oro.
171. Drapo uno picolo de tela de Cambraia, lavorato da li capi ad groppi d'oro et seta turchina, cum le sue franze d'oro, et da li canti uno lavoro strecto d'oro.
172. Drapo uno picolo de tela de Cambraia, lavorato da li capi ad groppi d'oro et seta morella, cum le sue franze d'oro, et da li canti uno lavoro stretto d'oro.

173. Drapo uno picolo de tela de Cambraia, lavorato da li capi ad groppi d'oro et seta negra, cum una franza d'oro, et da li canti uno lavoro stretto d'oro.
174. Drapo uno picolo de tela de Cambraia, lavorato dalli capi a groppi d'oro et seta verde, cum le franze attacate, et da li canti uno lavoro stretto d'oro.

Pectenadori de tela de Cambraia videlicet.
175. Pectenadoro uno de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori in mezo alle cussature d'oro et de seta nigra, cum una ternettina d'oro incirco stretto.
176. Pectenadoro uno de tela de Cambraia, cum li lavori in mezo alle cussature d'oro et seta cremesina, cum una tenretina d'oro stretta in circo.
177. Pectini da olio numero dui.
178. Peze sei de Cambraia.

Drapamenti de tela de Rheno lavorati de seta, videlicet.
179. Sparavero uno de tela de Rheno, cum franzette de seta de diversi colori per le cussature, cum la porta de uno bindello de seta alla francese, et suo pomo dorato et suo cordone de seta d'attacarlo.
180. Sparavero uno de tela de Rheno, cum franze de filo a cerco, cum la porta soa d'epso filo, et cum el suo pomo dorato et cordone de seta d'attacarlo.

Lenzoli de Rheno, videlicet.
181. Pare uno de lenzoli de tela de Rheno lavorati alle cussature.
182. Para dodece de lenzoli de tela de Rheno.
183. Cooperta una de tela de Rheno grande.
184. Cooperta una picola et supra per la carriola.
185. Cooperta una picola per lectera da campo.

Fodrette de Rheno, videliect.
186. Para doe de fodrette de Rheno, con cordelle de seta nigra et seta gialda.
187. Para doe de fodrette de Rheno, con cordelle de seta gialda bianca et morella.
188. Para quatro de fodrette de Rheno lavorate de seta nigra.
189. Para quatro de fodrette de Rheno lavorate de Rheno.

Camise de Rheno.
190. Camise vinticinque lavorate de seta nigra.
191. Camise quindici lavorate de filo.

Drapi de Rheno.
192. Drapi de Rheo, numero cinquanta.

Pectenadori de Rheno.
193. Pectenadoro uno cum le franze d'oro et seta cremesina.
194. Pectenadoro uno de tela de Rheno, cum li lavori facti a tellarolo d'oro seta nigra et gialda.
195. Peze octo de tela de Rheno et doi pectini da olio.

Paneti de Rheno, videlicet.
196. Paneti, peze vintiquatro.

Tela nostrana.
197. Cavezi cinquanta de tela nostrana.

Tovalie serviette et mantili de Rheno.
198. Brach. 274 alte quarte 13 de Rheno.
199. br. 237 de serviette de Rheno.
200. br. 242 de tovalie de Rheno alte quarte 9.
201. br. 48 de tovalie dopie alte quarte 8.
202. br. 113 $^{2}/_{4}$ de Guardanappe dopie.
203. br. 50 quarte 2 de mantili de Rheno.

Cathedre

204. Cathedre due de brocato d'oro
205. Cathedre due de veluto cremesino
206. Cathedre due da camera coperte de scarlato

Cossini

207. Cossino doi de brocato d'oro morelli longhi.
208. Cossino doi de brocato d'argento.
209. Cossino doi de veluto cremesino tondi.
210. Cossino doi de veluto cremesino quadri.
211. Cossino doi de veluto verde tondi.
212. Cossino doi de veluto verde quadri.
213. Cossino doi de veluto cilstro tondi.
214. Cossino doi de veluto cilestro quadri.
215. Para X de capse da relevo lavorate d'oro.
216. Para X de capse e solie dorate.
217. Cassete doe lavorate de pasta de perfumo, piene de bussole de savonato, et carafelle piene de polvere.
218. Spechio uno dazale lavorato de pasta de perfumo.
219. Didali d'argento 6.
220. Paternostri de diverse maynere.
221. Agoge da cusire, milliara nove.
222. Agoge da pomello, milliara nove.
223. Peze 40 de bindello de seta de diversi colori, cioè 31 di strette et 9 de larghe.

Selle per la persona de la Maestà sua, videlicet.

224. Sella una de veluto cremesino, cum la balzana in circo d'oro et argento tirato, cum tutti li soi fornimenti d'oro et d'argento tirato, et alli capi li mazi d'argento sopradorati cum el morso d'argento, cum le borgie, exceto la imboccatura et staffe d'argento dorate, et uno sperone d'argento dorato.
225. Sella una de veluto morello, cum le balzane large facte a scaroni d'oro tirato de relevo, cum tutti li soi fornimenti lavorati de relevo d'oro tirato ut supra, cum li mazi d'argento dorati da li capi, el morso et le borgie d'argento, excepto la imboccatura, staffe dorate cum el suo sperone d'argento.
226. Sella una de brocato d'argento cilestro, cum li soi fornimenti adorati, cum la staffa dorata et uno sperone d'argento dorato.
227. Sella una de veluto verde, cum el suo fornimento adorato.
228. Sella una de veluto beretino, cum el suo fornimento adorato.
229. Selle XII de raso cilestro per le done, cum tuti li soi fornimenti.
230. Selle XXII de panno tramontano per le done, cum li soi fornimenti.

Coperto da cesto da muo, cum mattaracii et cossini.

231. Coperta una de raso cilestro, cum le franze de seta alla sforzesca.
232. Mattaracii doi de raso cilestro per le ciste.
233. Cossini quatro de raso cilestro per le ceste, ut supra.
234. Coperta una de scarlato per le ceste, cum le franze alla sforzesca.
235. Mattaracij doi de scarlato per le ceste, ut supra.
236. Cossini 4 de scarlato.
237. Coprte cinque de panno rosso per le ceste de le done, cum le franze alla sforzesca.
238. Mattarazi dece de fustaneo per le ceste de le done.
239. Coperte XXV da mulo alla sforcesca, recamata cum le semprevive.

Panni de razo, videlicet.

240. Spalere sei alte et longhe, a divisa diverse da casa.
241. Banchali 6, cum le divise ut supra.
242. Tapeti 6 grandi.
243. Tapeti 6 mezani.

Appendix 5: Poetry

A. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 77[1]

Per mirar Policleto a prova fiso
con gli altri ch' ebber fama di quell'arte,
mill' anni non vedrian la minor parte
della beltà che m'àve il cor conquiso.

Even though Polyclitus should for a thousand years
compete looking with all the others who were famous
in that art, they would never see the smallest part of
the beauty that has conquered my heart.

Ma certo il mio Simon fu in Paradiso
onde questa gentil donna si parte;
ivi la vide, et la ritrasse in carte
per far fede qua giù del suo bel viso.

But certainly my Simon was in Paradise, whence
comes this noble lady; there he saw her and portrayed
her on paper, to attest down here to her lovely face.

L'opra fu ben di quelle che nel cielo
si ponno imaginar, non qui tra noi,
ove le membra fanno a l'alma velo;

The work is one of those which can be imagined only
in Heaven, not here among us, where the body is a
veil to the soul;

cortesia fe', né la potea far poi
che fu disceso a provar caldo et gielo
et del mortal sentiron gli occhi suoi.

it was a gracious act, nor could he have done it after
he came, down to feel heat and cold and his eyes
took on mortality.

B. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 78[2]

Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto
ch' a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile,
s'avesse dato a l'opera gentile
colla figura voce ed intelletto,

When Simon received the high idea which, for my
sake, put his hand to his stylus, if he had given to his
noble work voice and intellect along with form,

di sospir molti mi sgombrava il petto
che ciò ch' altri a più caro a me fan vile.
Però che 'n vista ella si monstra umile,
promettendomi pace ne l'aspetto,

he would have lightened my breast of many sighs that
make what others prize most vile to me. For in
appearance she seems, humble, and her expression
promises peace;

ma poi ch' i' vengo a ragionar con lei,
benignamente assai par che m'ascolte:
se risponder savesse a' detti miei!

then, when I come to speak to her, she seems to
listen most kindly: if she could only reply to my
words!

Pigmaliòn, quanto lodar ti dei
de l'imagine tua, se mille volte
n'avesti quel ch' i' sol una vorrei!

Pygmalion, how glad you should be of your statue,
since you received a thousand times what I yearn to
have just once!

C. Petrarch - *Canzoniere* no. 263[3]

Arbor victoriosa triumphale
honor d'imperadori et di poeti,
quanti m'ài fatto dì dogliosi et lieti
in questa breve mia vita mortale!

Victorious triumphal tree, the honour of emperors
and of poets, how many days you have made
sorrowful and glad for me
in this my brief mortal life!

[1] Petrarca 1976, p. 176-177 (translation: Robert M. Durling).
[2] Petrarca 1976, p. 178-179 (translation: Robert M. Durling).
[3] Petrarca 1976, p. 424-425 (translation: Robert M. Durling).

vera donna, et a cui di nulla cale, se non d'onor, che sovr'ogni altra mieti, né d'Amor visco temi, o lacci reti, né 'ngano altrui contr'al tuo senno vale.	True Lady, concerned for nothing but honour, which above all others you harvest, you do not fear the birdlime or the snares or nets of love, nor does any deception avail against your wisdom.
Gentileza di sangue, et l'altre care cosa tra noi, perle et robini et oro, quasi vil soma egualmente dispregi.	Nobility of blood and the other things prized among us, pearls and rubies and gold, like a vile burden, you equally despise.
L'alta beltà ch'al mondo non à pare noia t'è, se non quanto il bel thesoro di castità par ch'ella adorni et fregi.	Your high beauty, which has no equal in the world, is painful to you except insofar as it seems to adorn and set off your lovely treasure of chastity.

D. Bernardo Bellincioni - Sonnet on Leonardo's portrait of Cecilia Gallerani[4]

Di che t'adiri? a chi invidia hai Natura? Al Vinci che ha ritratto una tua stella; Cecilia se bellissima oggi è quella Che a' suoi begli occhi el sol par ombra scura.	Why are you angry? whom do you envy, Nature? Vinci, who has portrayed one of your stars; Cecilia, now so beautiful, is she Whose lovely eyes cast the sun into dim shadow.
L'honor è tuo, se ben con sua pittura La fa che par che ascolti, e non favella. Pensa, quanto sarà più viva e bella Più a te fia gioia età futura.	The honour is yours, though in his painting He's made her seem to listen, but not to speak. Think how very alive and beautiful it will be To your greater glory, for all time.
Ringratiar dunque Ludovico or puoi L'ingegno e la man di Lionardo, Che a posteri di lei voglion far parte.	Therefore you may now thank Ludovico, And the genius and skill of Leonardo, Who want her to belong to posterity.
Chi lei vedrà così benché sia tardo Vederla viva, dirà: basti a noi Comprender or quel che è natura et arte.	He who sees her thus, even though too late To see her alive, will say: this is enough for us Now to understand nature and art.

E. Il Pistoia - Belle donne a Milan[5]

Belle donne a Milan, ma grasse trope: il parlar tu lo sai, sai che son bianche, strette nel mezzo, ben quartate in l'anche, paion capon pastati in su le groppe.	Beautiful women in Milan, but too fat, you know the talking, you know they are pale slim in the middle, well fattened on the hips they resemble the plumpest of capons.
Porton certe giornee e certe gioppe che le fan parer ample nel petto, anche basse hanno le pianelle, vanno stanche, tutte le più son colme in su le coppe.	They wear a certain type of *giornee* and *cioppe* that makes them look fuller in the breasts They go about wearily in low-heeled slippers, moreover their cleavages are overfilled at the brims.
Le veste lor di seta e di rosato le scoffie d'oro e nel petto il gioiello maniche di riccamo o di broccato.	Their dresses of silk and rose-colour, their golden head-dresses, on the breast a jewel, sleeves embroidered, or made of brocade.
In spalla hanno il balasso ricco e bello, tutto il collo di perle incatenato cum un pendente o d'intaglio o niello:	On the shoulder a rich and beautiful balas ruby, interlaced pearls around the neck, with an engraved or nielloed pendant,

[4] Italian text and translation cited from: Shell and Sironi 1992, p. 48-49. Originally published in the 1493 edition of Bellincioni's *Rime*.
[5] Cammelli 1908, p. 113-114, sonnet LXX. Translation partially cited from: Syson and Thornton 2001, p. 31.

ogni dito ha lo anello.	every finger wears a ring.
Quando le vedi poi mangiare a deschi,	When you see them eating from their plates,
paion tutte botteghe da Thedeschi.	they all look like German shops.

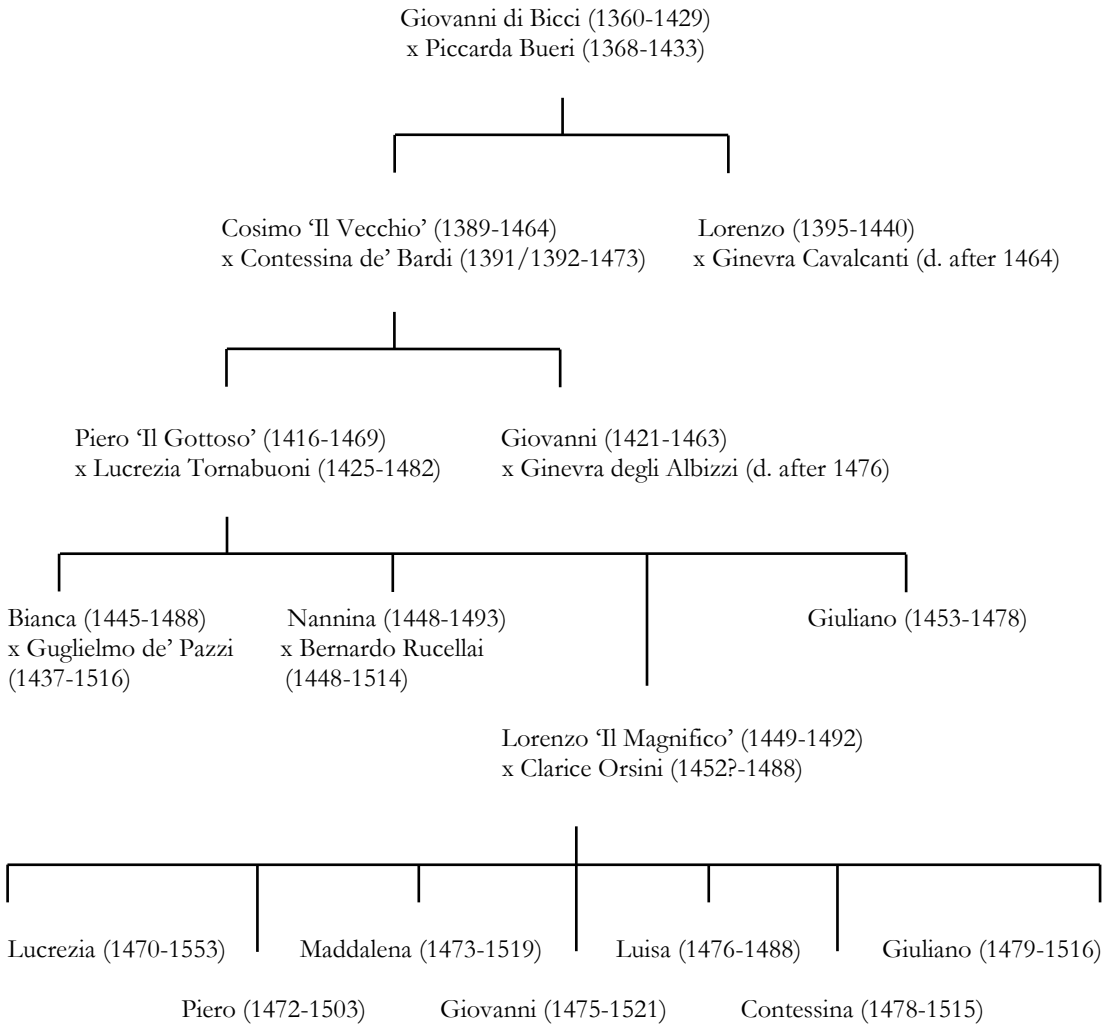
F. Tito Vespasiano Strozzi - Ad Cosmum pictorem[6]

Ad Cosmum pictorem	To Cosmè the painter
Ecce novis Helene consumitur anxia curis,	Look at troubled Helen, novel cares consume her,
Vultqe tua pingi Cosme perite manu.	She would be painted, Cosimo, by your hand,
Scilicet in longos ut nobilis exeat annos,	expertly, of course she may turn out famous in the
Et clarum egregia nomen ab arte ferat.	future, And her name remain bright through exceptional art.
Sed dum consultat, que tantis commoda rebus	But while she debates on what season suits such
Tempora, quos habitus induat, annus abit.	serious business, and what clothes to wear, a year
Ver modo laudatur, modo dicitur aptior estas,	disappears. Spring is praised, indeed, but summer's
Nunc placet autunus, nuncqe probatur hyems.	called more suitable, Now autumn pleases and now winter is endorsed.
Nunc cupit externis pingi velata capillos	Now, wrapped up, she wants her hair painted with
Cultibus, & nuda nunc libet ese coma.	some covering, now again she yearns for her tresses
Dumqe diem, & varios alternat inepta paratus,	to be bare. And while the silly girl shifts the day and
Quod cupit, in longas protrahit usqe moras.	different forms of dress, She drags out what she wants in delays forever.
Quid tibi vis? quid stulta paras? an forte vereris,	What do you want, what are you arranging, fool?
Ne levitas populo nota sit ista satis?	Afraid perhaps This fickleness of yours may become
Tales, totqe tibi cum sint in corpore mende	well known to everyone? Since your body's
Forme pictorem queris habere tue?	imperfections are so great and numerous,
	Do you require to have a painter of your looks?
Quod si cura nove te tangit imaginis, & si	For if worry about a fresh image bothers you,
spectari a sera posteriate cupis,	And you would be gazed on by rough posterity,
E dita, que populus de te modo carmina legit,	The published poems that people read about you,
Illa tuos mores, effigiemqe tenent.	These preserve your manner and your picture too.
Illa tibi poterunt pallorem afferre legenti,	These can bring pallor to you as you read them,
Si tener impuro fugit ab ore pudor.	Even if youthful modesty flees a shameless face.
Forsan & arte mea longum transmissa per euxm,	Maybe by my art, transmitted through the ages,
Altera venturo tempore Thais eris.	You will be the second Thais of a later time.

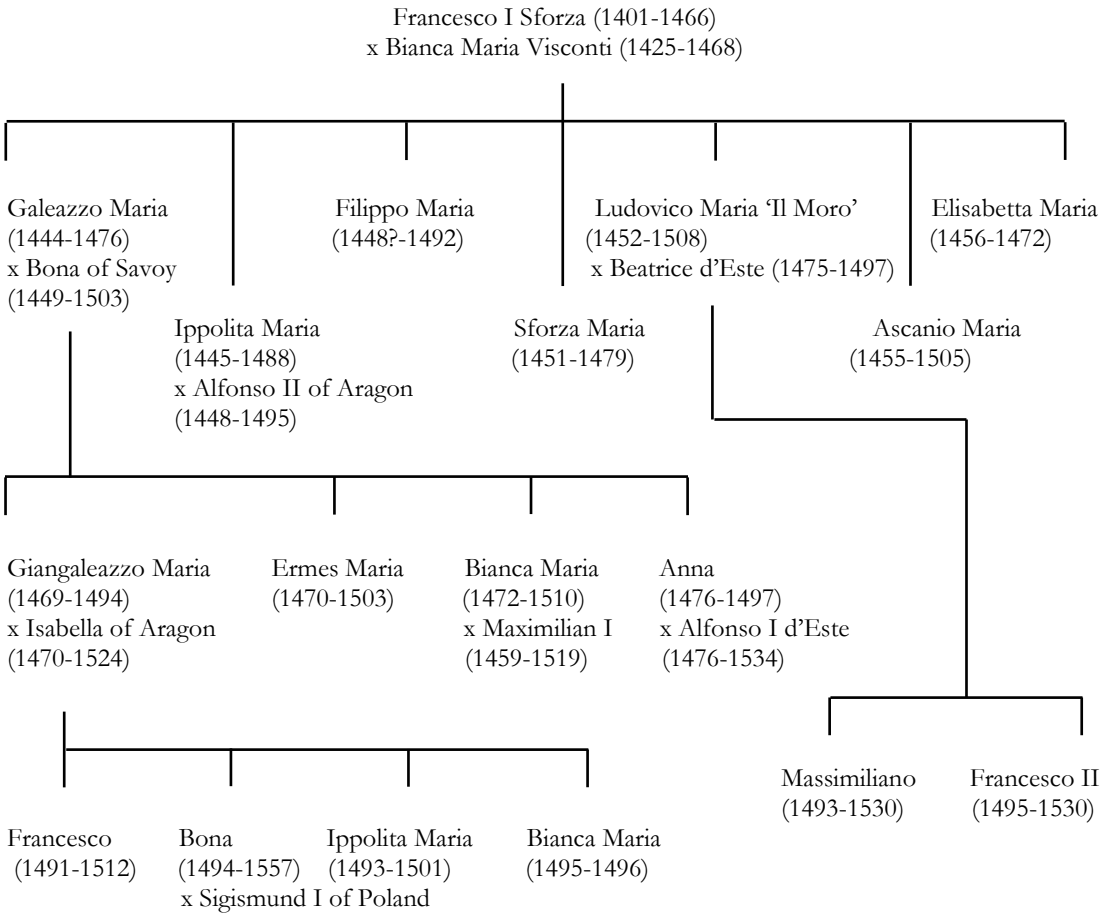
[6] Strozzi 1530, p. 155. Translation: Gilbert 1980, p. 187-188.

Appendix 6: Genealogies

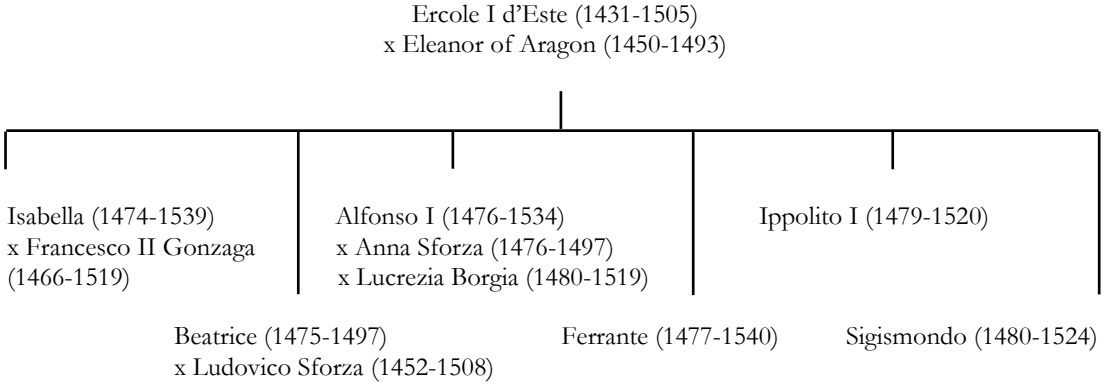
A. Medici family



B. Sforza family

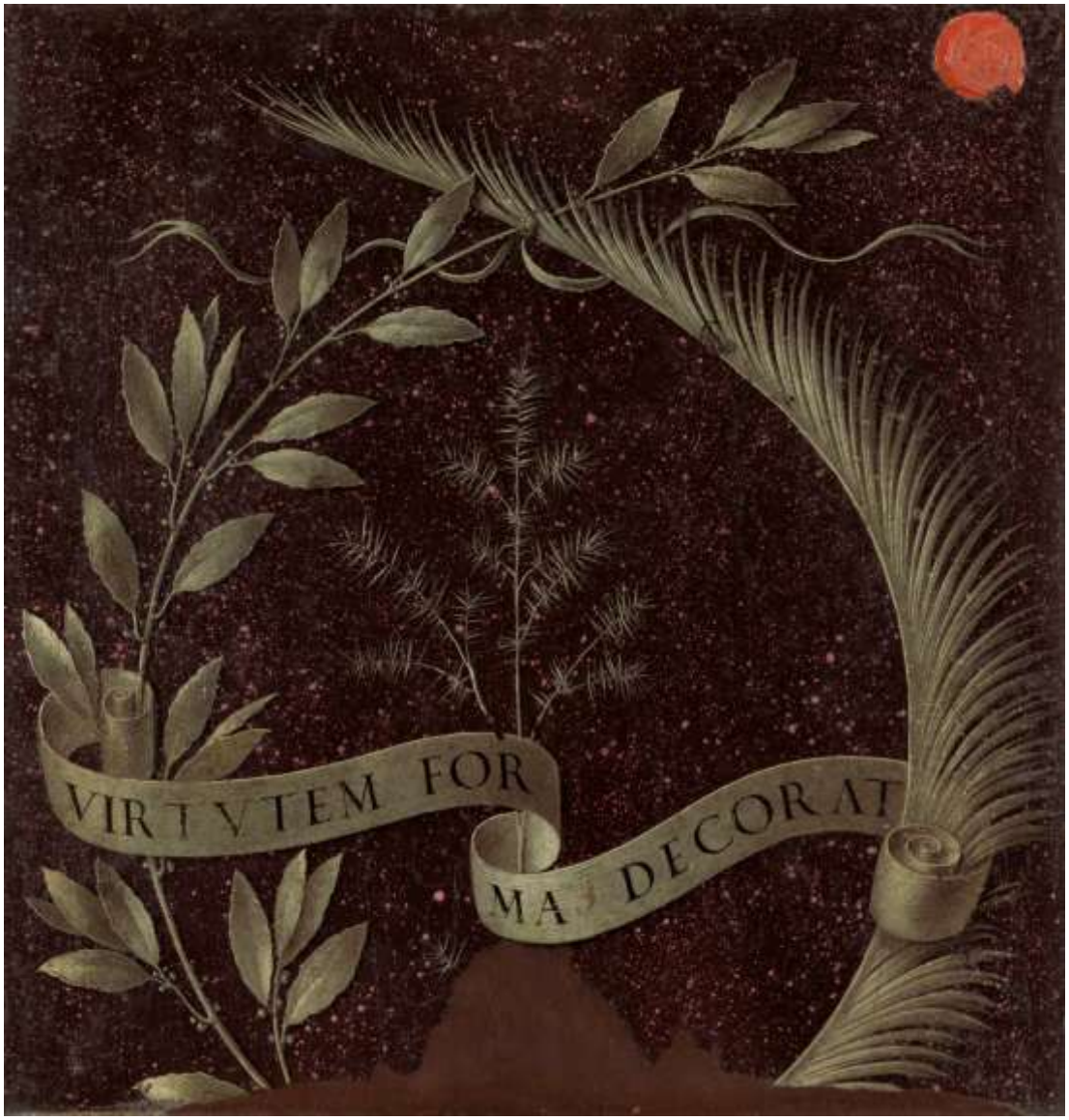


C. Este family



Figures

1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* (obverse), c. 1475-1480, oil on poplar (?) panel, 38.1 x 37 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1967.6.1.a.



2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* (reverse), c. 1475-1480, oil on poplar (?) panel, 38.1 x 37 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1967.6.1.b.

3. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani*, known as *The Lady with an Ermine*, c. 1489-1490, oil on walnut panel, 54.8 x 40.3 cm, Cracow, Czartoryski Museum, inv. no. 134.

4. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of a Woman*, known as *La Belle Ferronière*, c. 1493-1494, oil on walnut panel, 63 x 45 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 778.

5. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Isabella d'Este*, 1499-1500, black and red chalk with stump, ochre chalk, white highlights on paper, pricked, 610 x 465 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, inv. no. M.I. 753.

6. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503-1517, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 779.

7. Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of a Young Man*, known as *The Musician*, c. 1486-1487, oil on walnut panel, 44.7 x 32 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, inv. no. 99.

8. Anonymous, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, known as *La Bella Principessa*, date uncertain, black, red, white chalk, strengthened with pen and ink on vellum laid down on oak panel, 330 x 239 mm, private collection.

9. Leonardo da Vinci, *Annunciation*, c. 1470-1478, oil and tempera on poplar panel, 100 x 221.5 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. no. 1618.

10. Leonardo da Vinci, *Madonna of the Carnation*, c. 1475, oil on poplar panel, 62 x 48.5 cm, Munich, Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 7779.

11. Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of the Hanged Bernardo Baroncelli*, 1479, pen and brown ink with some traces of charcoal on paper, 192 x 73 mm, Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, inv. no. AI 659; NI 1777.

12. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, 1483-c. 1485, oil on poplar panel, 199 x 122 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no.777.

13. Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the Rocks*, 1491/1492-1499 and 1506-1508, oil on poplar panel, 189.5 x 120 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG1093.

14. Leonardo da Vinci, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, c. 1503-1517, oil on poplar panel, 168.4 x 113 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 776.

15. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement* (possibly Francesca Scolari and Bonaccorso Pitti), c. 1440-1444, tempera on panel, 64.1 x 41.9 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 89.15.19.

16. Fra Filippo Lippi, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1445, tempera on poplar panel, 49.5 x 32.9 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 1700.

17. Circle of Paolo Uccello, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1445-1450, tempera on panel, 41.3 x 31.1 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 32.100.98.

18. Master of the Castello Nativity (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1450-1465, tempera and gold on panel transferred to canvas, 40 x 27.3 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 49.7.6.

19. Master of the Castello Nativity (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman*, known as *A Young Lady of Fashion*, c. 1460-1465, tempera on panel, 44.1 x 31.5 cm, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, inv. no. P27w58.

20. Giovanni di ser Giovanni, known as Lo Scheggia (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1455-1465, tempera and gold on panel, transferred to canvas, 44.1 x 36.4 cm, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, inv. no. 34.

21. Giovanni di ser Giovanni, known as Lo Scheggia, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1460, tempera on panel, 39 x 27 cm, Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André, inv. no. MJAP-P 1832-2.

22. Alesso Baldovinetti, *Portrait of a Lady in Yellow*, c. 1465, tempera and oil on panel, 62.9 x 40.6 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG 758.

23. Anonymous Florentine, *Portrait of a Lady in Red*, c. 1460-1470, oil and tempera on panel, 42 x 29 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG 585.

24. Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, c. 1460-1465, oil and tempera on poplar panel, 52.5 x 36.5 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 1614.

25. Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1460-1465, tempera (?) and oil on poplar panel, 45.5 x 32.7 cm, Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, inv. no. 442.

26. Antonio or Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1475, tempera on panel, 48.9 x 35.2 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 50.135.3.

27. Antonio or Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1475, oil and tempera on panel, 55 x 34 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 no. 1491.

28. Paolo Uccello, *The Birth of the Virgin* (detail), c. 1425-1450, fresco, Cappella dell'Assunta, Saint Stephan Cathedral, Prato.

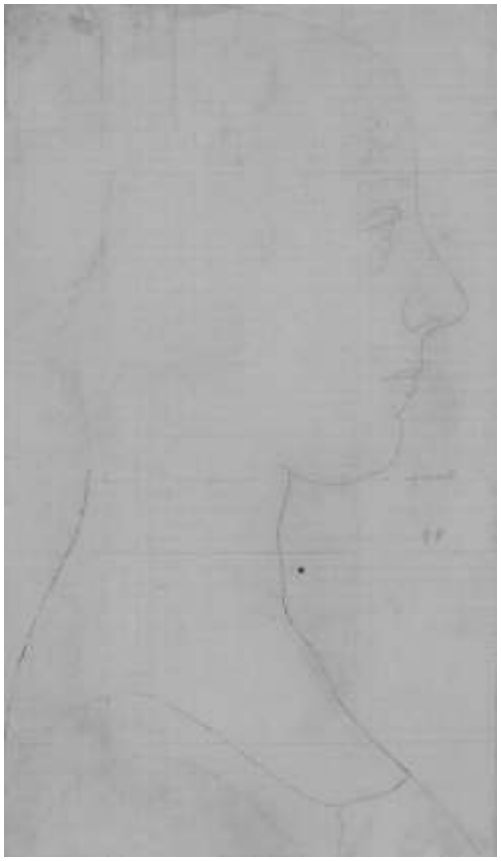
29. Lo Scheggia, *Spalliera Panel depicting a Wedding Scene*, known as *Cassone Adimari* (detail), c. 1460, tempera on panel, 88.5 x 303 cm, Florence, Galleria dell'Academia, inv. no. 8457.

30. Three brooches, Franco-Burgundian, c. 1420-1450, gold setting with gems, 46.7 x 31.8 x 19.5 mm, 26 x 29 x 14 mm, 19.8 x 19.6 x 13.8 mm, London, British Museum, inv. nos. AF.2768-AF.2770.

31. Hugo van der Goes, *Portinari Triptych* (detail of right wing showing Margherita Portinari), c. 1473-1478, oil on panel, 253 x 141 cm (right wing), Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1912 no. 3193.

32. Niccolò Fiorentino, *Portrait Medal of Ludovica Tornabuoni*, c. 1485-1486, bronze, diameter 7.52 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1957.14.891.a.

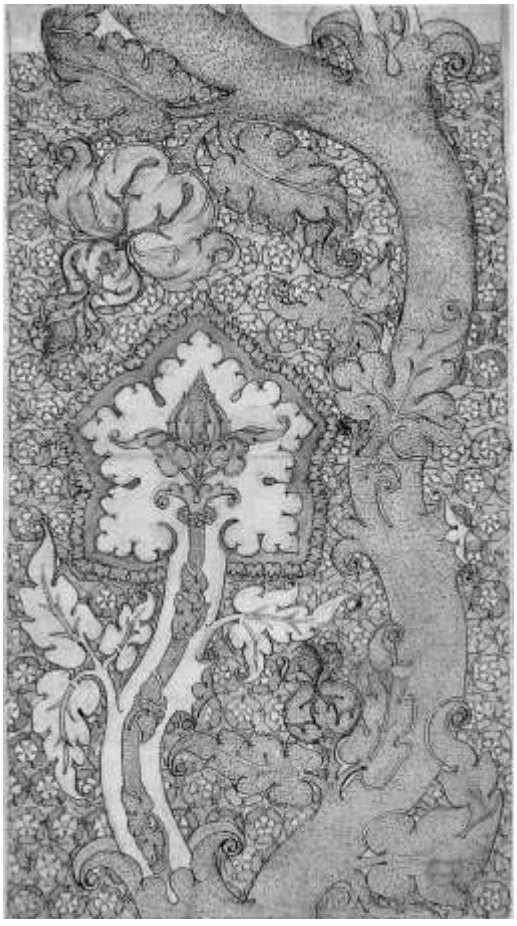
33. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of the Virgin* (detail of Ludovica Tornabuoni), 1486-1490, fresco, Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Tornabuoni Chapel.



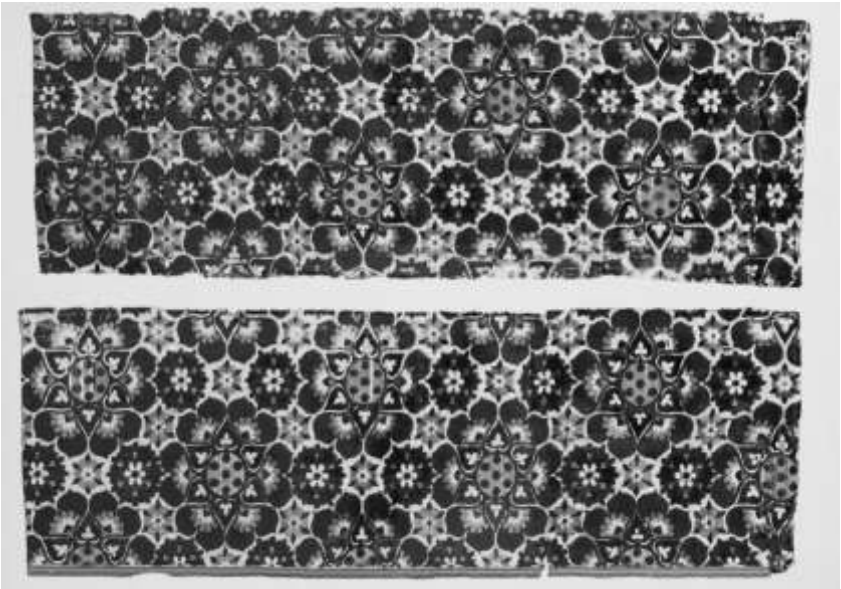
34. Anonymous Florentine, *Profile of a Woman*, c. 1470-1480, black chalk over metal point, squared in pen and ink on paper, 363 x 210 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12808.

35. Piero or Antonio del Pollaiuolo, *San Miniato Altarpiece with Saint Vincent, Saint James and Saint Eustach*e, 1466, oil and tempera on oak panel, 172 x 179 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. no. 1890 1617.

36. Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Tobias and the Angel*, c. 1465-1470, oil (?) on panel, 188 x 119 cm, Turin, Galleria Sabauda, inv. no. 117.



37. Antonio Pisanello, *Textile Study*, pen and brown ink, yellow and beige wash on white paper, 576 x 315 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, inv. no. 2537 recto.



38. Velvet fragments with Medici arms, c. 1440-1500, Italian (Florence or Venice), silk and metal thread, 78.7 x 53.3 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 46.156.118.

39. Andrea del Verrocchio, *Bust of a Lady with Flowers*, c. 1475, white marble, 48 x 50.8 x 23.8 cm, Florence, Museo del Bargello, inv. no. 115S.

40. Paulus Marsus, *Bembicae Peregrinae*, fol. 3v, 1477 or later, Windsor, Eton College, Codex 156.

41. Infrared diagram of the reverse of Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*, 1995.

42. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Lucrezia Tornabuoni*, c. 1475, tempera and oil on panel, 53.3 x 39.9 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1952.5.62.

43. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Lady* (formerly known as Smeralda Bandinelli), c. 1470-1480, 65.7 x 41 cm, tempera on panel, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. CAI.100.

44. Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, *Announcement of Death to Santa Fina* (detail), 1475-1477/78, fresco, San Gimigniano, Collegiata Santa Maria Assunta, Cappella di Santa Fina.

45. Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop, *Obsequies of Santa Fina* (detail), 1475-1477/78, fresco, San Gimigniano, Collegiata Santa Maria Assunta, Cappella di Santa Fina.

46. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1485, tempera on panel, 61.3 x 40.5 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 353.

47. Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1480-1490, tempera on panel, 48 x 35.5 cm, New York, private collection.

48. Domenico Ghirlandaio (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1480-1485, tempera on poplar panel, 49.8 x 37.4 cm, Altenburg, Lindenau Museum, inv. no. 102.

49. Davide Ghirlandaio (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1480-1490, tempera and oil on panel, 56.1 x 37.7 cm, Williamstown MA, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, inv. no. 1955-938.

50. Davide Ghirlandaio (attr.), *Portrait of a Woman* (sometimes identified as Selvaggia Sassetti), c. 1487-1488, tempera on panel, 57.2 x 44.1 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 32.100.71.

51. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Angel appearing to Zacharias* (detail of Cristoforo Landini), 1486-1490, fresco, Florence, Santa Maria Novella, Tornabuoni Chapel.

52. Sandro Botticelli, *Spalliera depicting a Wedding Banquet* (detail of a scene from the story of Nastagio degli Onesti), 1483, tempera on panel, 84 x 142 cm, Florence, private collection.

53. Andrea del Verrocchio and workshop, *Tobias and the Angel*, c. 1470-1475, tempera on panel, 83.6 x 66 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG781.

54. Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1470, oil on oak panel, 28 x 21 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 1821 (532).

55. Hans Memling, *Portrait of a Man with a Coin of Nero* (possibly Bernardo Bembo), c. 1473-1474, oil on oak panel, 31 x 23.2 cm, Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, inv. no. 5.

56. Hans Memling, *Portrait of Maria Maddalena Baroncelli*, c. 1470, oil on panel, 44.1 x 34 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 14.40.627.

57. Andrea del Verrocchio, *Bust of a Young Woman*, c. 1470-1490, white marble, 47.3 x 48.7 x 23.8 cm, New York, The Frick Collection, inv. no. 1961.2.87.

58. Circle of Andrea del Verrocchio, *Bust of a Woman*, c. 1470, white marble, 53 x 48.8 x 19.9 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1939.1.326.

59. Desiderio da Settignano, *Bust of a Woman* (sometimes identified as Marietta di Lorenzo Strozzi), c. 1460-1464, white marble, 52.5 x 47.8 x 23.8 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, inv. no. 77.

60. Desiderio da Settignano, *Bust of a Young Woman*, c. 1453-1464, white marble, 47 x 44 x 21 cm, Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. no. 62S.

61. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi*, c. 1489-1490, tempera and oil on panel, 77 x 49 cm, Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, inv. no. 158 (1935.6).

62. Ambrogio de Predis, *Portrait of Bianca Maria Sforza*, c. 1493, oil on poplar panel, 51 x 32.5 cm, Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1942.9.53

63. Anonymous Lombard artist (sometimes attr. to Bonifacio Bembo), *Portrait of Francesco Sforza*, c. 1460-1480, tempera on canvas, 49 x 31 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera, inv. Reg. Cron. 2238 no. 949.

64. Anonymous Lombard artist (sometimes attr. to Bonifacio Bembo), *Portrait of Bianca Maria Visconti*, c. 1460-1480, tempera on canvas, 49 x 31 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera, inv. Reg. Cron. 2239 no. 950.

65. Gian Cristoforo Romano, *Portrait Bust of Beatrice d'Este*, c. 1490-1491, white marble, 59.5 x 30 x 24.3 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. ML.10.

66. Cristoforo Solari, *Effigies of Ludovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este*, c. 1497, white marble, length 185 cm, Pavia, Certosa di Pavia.

67. Piero del Pollaiuolo, *Portrait of Galeazzo Maria Sforza*, c. 1471, tempera on panel, 65 x 42 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 no. 1492.

68. Anonymous Lombard painter, *Portrait of Beatrice d'Este*, c. 1490-1497, oil on panel, 46.5 x 35 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 no. 8383.

69. Anonymous Lombard painter, *Portrait of Beatrice d'Este*, c. 1490-1497, tempera and/or oil on panel, 51 x 34,5 cm, Oxford, Christ Church Gallery, inv. no. 1765.

70. Master of the Pala Sforzesca, *Pala Sforzesca* (detail of Beatrice d'Este), c. 1494-1495, tempera and oil on panel, 230 x 165 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera, inv. no. 285.

71. Ambrogio de Predis (attr.), *Profile Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1490-1500, tempera and oil on panel, 51 x 34 cm, Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, inv. no. 100.

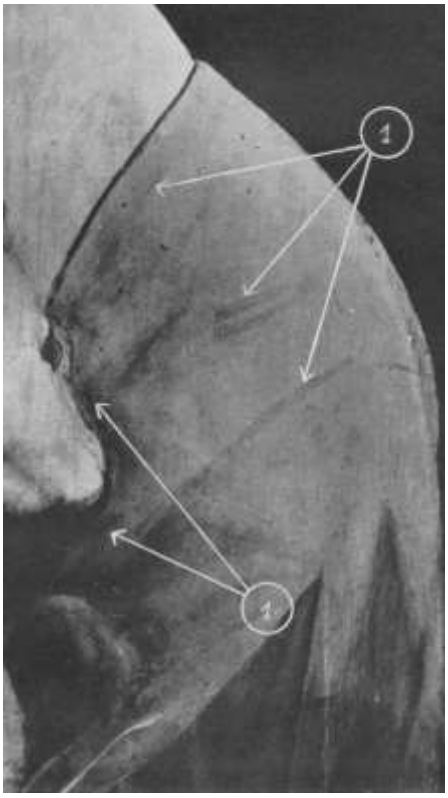
72. Bernardino de' Conti, *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1500, tempera on panel, 78 x 58.5 cm, private collection.

73. Master B. F. (attr.), *The Investiture of Ludovico Sforza*, miniature in *Arcimboldi Missal*, c. 1495-97, Milan, Cathedral Library, MS D.1.13, f. 1r.

74. Anonymous Lombard painter, *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1490-1500, tempera on canvas, 139.7 x 60.5 cm, London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG2251.

75. Brocaded velvet with motif of firing branches, c. 1450-1500, Italian (Milan), pile-on-pile silk velvet brocaded with gold thread, additional embroidery, 15.6 x 12.2 cm, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. 470-1884.

76. Velvet fragment with sempervivum tectorum motif, around 1500, Italian (Milan), silk velvet brocaded with metal-wrapped thread, 40.5 x 58.4 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 51.139.2a.



77. Detail of infrared photograph Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine*, 1950s. The arrows indicate the brush strokes of the underdrawing.

78. Lorenzo Costa, *Virgin and Child with the Bentivoglio Family* (detail), 1488, tempera on canvas, 368 x 342 cm, Bologna, San Giacomo Maggiore, Bentivoglio Chapel.

79. Francesco Laurana, *Bust of Eleanor of Aragon*, c. 1473, white marble with original polychromy and gilding, 44 x 42.5 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. KK_3405.

80. Francesco Laurana, *Bust of Beatrice of Aragon*, c. 1474-1475, white marble, 40.6 x 40.3 x 20.3 cm, New York, Frick Collection, inv. no. 1961.2.86.

81. Coin with the profile of Beatrice d'Este, 1496, Mint of Milan, copper, width 2.7 cm, Milan, Civiche Raccolte Numismatiche, inv. no. 773.

82. Anonymous miniaturist, *Alphonso and his Wife attending Mass*, miniature in *Prayer Book of Alphonso V of Aragon*, c. 1442, London, British Library, Ms. 28962, f. 281v.

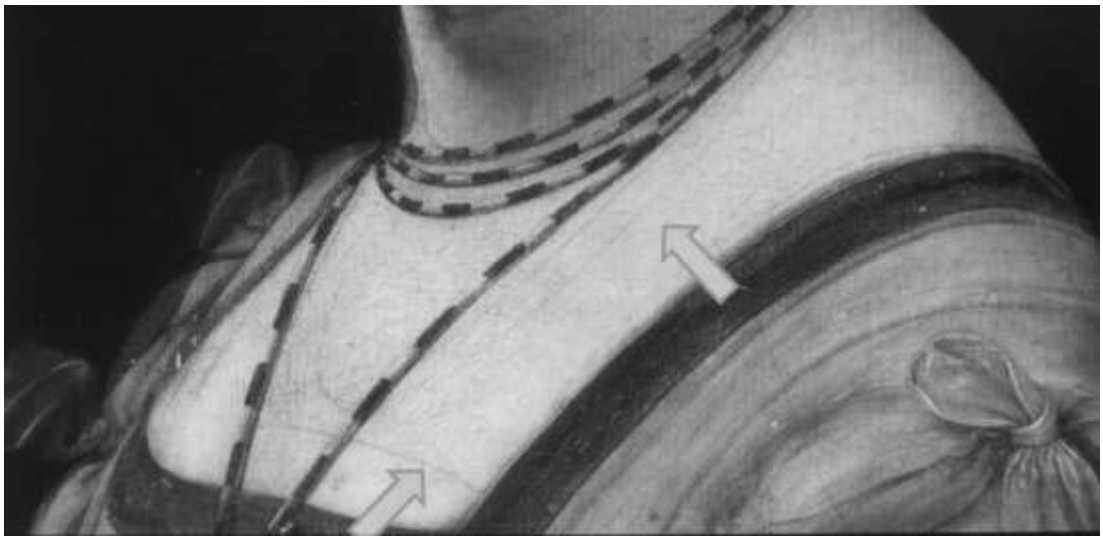
83. Anonymous Neapolitan miniaturist, *Saint John the Baptist in front of Herod and Herodias*, miniature in *Vita di San Giovanni Battista*, c. 1475-1500, Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. XIII F. 24, f. 96r.

84. Master of the *Chronique scandaleuse*, *Queen Anne of Brittany and her Ladies lament the King's favouring of the Faultless Lady*, miniature in Ovid's *Heroides*, 1492, private collection, f. 54.

85. Jean Hey (called Master of Moulins), *Margaret of Austria*, c. 1490, oil on oak panel, 32.7 x 23 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 1975.1.130.

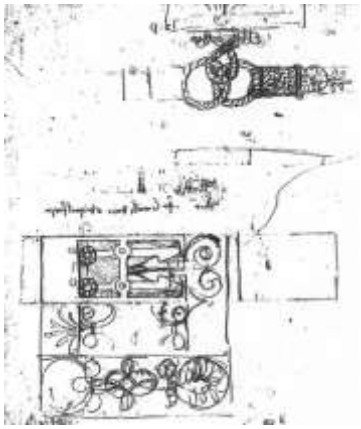
86. Leonardo da Vinci, *Drapery Study for a Kneeling Woman*, c. 1470-1480, grey-brown wash heightened with white on linen, 283 x 192 mm, London, British Museum, inv. no. 1895,0915.489.

87. Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, *Portrait of a Lady in Grey*, c. 1498-1500, oil on panel, 49.5 x 40.5 cm, Isola Bella, Collezione Borromeo, inv. 1838 no. 93.

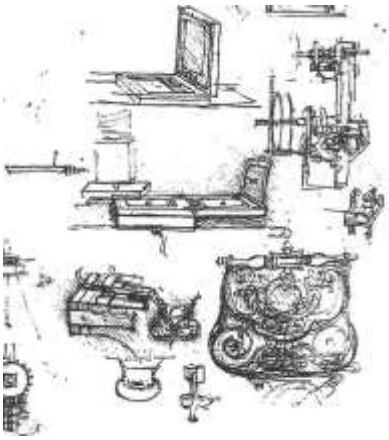


88. Detail of infrared reflectogram of Leonardo's *Belle Ferronnière*. The arrows indicate the lines of the underdrawing.

89. Leonardo da Vinci, *Design of a Pendant*, c. 1487-1490, ink on paper, lost (formerly Oxford, Christ Church Picture Gallery).



90. Leonardo da Vinci, *Design of a Belt Buckle*, Codex Atlanticus, f. 797r (292 v-a) (detail).



91. Leonardo da Vinci, *Design of a Bag*, Codex Atlanticus f. 1038 (372 r-b) (detail).

92. Leonardo da Vinci, *A Masquerader on Horseback*, c. 1517-1518, pen and ink over black chalk on paper, 240 x 152 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12574.

93. Leonardo da Vinci, *A Standing Masquerader*, c. 1517-1518, black chalk, pen and ink and wash on paper, 273 x 183 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12575.

94. Leonardo da Vinci, *A Standing Masquerader*, c. 1517-1518, black chalk on paper, 215 x 112 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12576.

95. Leonardo da Vinci, *A Standing Masquerader*, c. 1517-1518, black chalk on paper, 214 x 107 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12577.

96. Gian Cristoforo Romano, *Portrait Medal of Isabella d'Este*, 1498, bronze, diameter 4 cm, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. no. A.232-1910.

97. Gian Cristoforo Romano, *Portrait Medal of Isabella d'Este*, 1498 or after, gold with enameled decoration and diamonds, diameter 6.9 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Münzkabinett, inv. no. MK 6.833bβ.

98. Copy after Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Isabella d'Este*, after 1500, black chalk on two joined sheets of paper, 629 x 484 mm, Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. WA1863.617.

99. Anonymous after Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Isabella d'Este*, c. 1500-1510, red chalk on paper, 252 x 183 mm, London, British Museum, inv. no. 1940,0413.59.

100. Anonymous, *Marriage Medal of Francesco Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este* (obverse), 1490, bronze, diameter 1.65 cm, private collection.

101. Copy after Titian, *Isabella d'Este in Red*, 16th century?, oil on panel, 101 x 82 cm, present whereabouts unknown

102. Peter Paul Rubens, *Isabella d'Este in Red*, c. 1601-1602, oil on canvas, 102 x 81 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG_1534.

103. Titian, *Isabella d'Este in Black*, c. 1534-1536, oil on canvas, 102.4 x 64.7 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. GG_83.

104. Coin with the portrait of Empress Livia, 22-23 AD, copper alloy, diameter 2.8 cm, London, British Museum, inv. no. R.6361.

105. Giovanni Filangieri Candida, *Marriage Medal of Maximilian I and Mary of Burgundy* (reverse), 1477 or shortly after, cast bronze, diameter 5.1 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 25.142.37.

106. Bernardino Luini, *Portrait of a Young Lady with a Fan*, c. 1520-1525, black, red, brown, yellow and white chalk on paper, 414 x 285 mm, Vienna, Albertina, inv. no. 59.

107. Titian, *Portrait of Giulia Varano*, 1545-1547, oil on canvas, 113.5 x 88.5 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. no. 764.

108. Raphael, *Portrait of Maddalena Strozzi Doni*, c. 1504, oil on panel, 65 x 45.8 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 59.

109. Raphael, *Lady with a Unicorn*, c. 1505-1506, oil on canvas transferred onto panel, 67.7 x 53.2 cm, Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 371.

110. Bartolomeo di Fruosino, *Childbirth Tray with a Confinement-Room Scene* (recto, detail), tempera on panel, 1428, diameter 59 cm, private collection, on loan to: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. L.1995.17.

111. Jacometto Veneziano, *Portrait of a Lady* (obverse), c. 1480-1490, oil on panel, 34 x 27.5 cm, Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. 243.

112. Raphael, *Donna Velata*, c. 1513-1516, oil on canvas, 86 x 64 cm, Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, inv. 1912 no. 245.

113. Raphael, *Study for the Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1505-1507, pen and brown ink, traces of black chalk on paper, 222 x 159 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, inv. no. 3882.

114. Infrared reflectogram of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, 2008.

115. image next page.

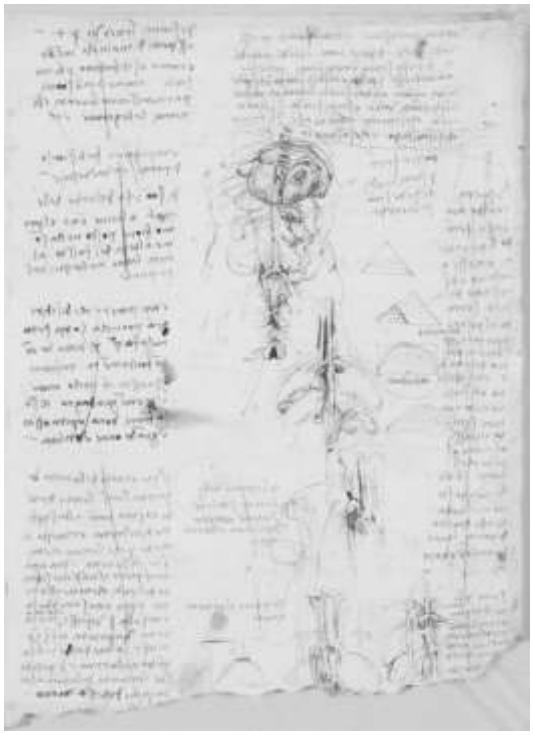
116. Infrared reflectogram of the workshop copy of *Mona Lisa*, 2011.

115. Workshop of Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa, c. 1506-1512, oil on walnut panel, 76.3 x 57 cm, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, inv. no. P-504.

117. Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of a Mountain Landscape*, c. 1508-1511, black chalk on paper, 164 x 201 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12397.

118. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa* (detail of neckline), c. 1503-1517, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. 779.

119. Leonardo da Vinci, *Study for the of the Arm of the Virgin*, c. 1507-1510, black and red chalk, pen and ink, brush and ink and white heightening on pale red prepared paper, 86 x 170 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12532.



120. Leonardo da Vinci, *Sheet with Anatomical Studies and Notes on Painting* (recto), c. 1510, pen and ink on paper, 219 x 315 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 19121.

121. Botticelli, *Primavera* (detail of the three Graces), c. 1480, tempera on panel, 203 x 314 cm, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 no. 8360.

122. Andrea del Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci, *Design for a Tournament Banner*, c. 1474, metalpoint, black chalk and brown ink on paper, 148 x 259 mm, Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. 212E.

123. Andrea del Verrocchio, *Head of a Woman*, c. 1470-1475, black chalk and grey wash on paper, pricked, 408 x 327 mm, Oxford, Christ Church Gallery, inv. no. 0005.

124. Leonardo da Vinci, *Sheet with Studies and Notes on the Movement of Water* (recto), c. 1510, pen and ink on paper, 154 x 217 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12579.

125. Leonardo da Vinci, *Head of a Woman in Profile*, c. 1468-1475, black chalk or lead point, brown and grey-black wash, heightened with lead white on paper, 282 x 199 mm, Florence, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. no. 428E.

126. Andrea del Verrocchio, *Head of a Woman*, c. 1475, charcoal (some oiled?), heightened with white, pen and brown ink on paper, 325 x 272 mm, London, British Museum, inv. no. 1895,0915.785.

127. Altichiero, *Portrait of Petrarch*, illumination in Petrarch's *De viris illustribus*, 1379, Paris, Bibliothèque National, Ms. LATIN 6069F, fol. Av.

128. Leonardo da Vinci, *Two Grotesque Heads* (recto), c. 1485-1490, pen and ink on paper, 65 x 70 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12453.

129. Leonardo da Vinci, *A Satire on Aged Lovers* (recto), c. 1490, pen and ink over black chalk on paper, 262 x 123 mm, Windsor, Royal Collection, inv. no. RL 12449.

Glossary

accia	coarse linen
alessandrino	deep blue colour
alluciolato	little loops of gold thread scattered throughout a fabric, litt. 'fireflies'
annella	ring
arriciato	little loops of gold thread added to a fabric, grouped together to create a pattern
bacino	salver
balasso	balas ruby
baldacchino	lampas silk that could be executed in one or more colours with or without the addition of gold or silver threads
becchetto	long hanging tail of a *cappuccio*
beretta	cap
bigio	shade of grey
bisso	fine linen
brochetta	brooch
cambrai (cambraia)	linen of fine quality, named after the French town of Cambrai, where it was produced
camicia	linen shirt or shift
camora (chamora)	undergarment in use at the courts of northern Italy (variant of the Florentine *gamurra*), often made of silk luxury fabrics and sumptuously decorated
cappellina	little cap
cappello	hat or cap
cappuccio	chaperon, male headdress originating in the fourteenth century, still worn in Florence in the fifteenth century
chermisi	crimson, dye obtained from a variety of shield lice known as kermes
ciambellotto	camlet
cioppa	ample overgarment with sleeves
coazzone	hairstyle consisting of a long pony-tail, covered with a piece of fabric and tied together ribbons
coda	train
collaretto	neckband
corna	horn-shaped headdress
corrigia (coreza)	girdle
cotta	undergarment, usually made of costly silk fabrics
coverciere	partlet
crespina (crispina)	cap or hairnet, made of metal threads
cuffia (scuffia)	cap
domaschino	damask
faldia (falda, faldiglia, faldilia)	underskirt with hoops to give fullness to a dress, of Spanish origin
fazoletto	handkerchief
fermaglio (fermalio)	brooch, sometimes also pendant
fodero	lining
fodretta	pillow case
forzerino	small box, usually for jewellery
forziere	chest, often used to store clothes

frappature / frastagli	dagged edges, that is decoratively cut hemlines, for instance leaf-shaped or scalloped
frenello	string of pearls to be worn in the hair
gamurra (chamurra)	undergarment used in Florence, relatively cheap and made of woollen fabrics
ghatti di Spagna	certain type of fur
ghirlanda	garland-shaped headdress
ghuanciale (ghanciale)	cushion
giornea	sleeveless overgarment
gorgiera (gorghera)	partlet (see also: coverciere)
gorzarino	elaborate necklace, worn in Milan
grana	expensive red dye, see also: chermisi
grembiule	apron
groppi	design of interlaced cords popular in Milan, also known as *nodi*
guardacuore da parto	maternity shirt
guarnacca	fourteenth-century equivalent of a *giornea*, a sleeveless overgarment
guarnello	simple dress worn on top the *camicia* made of linen, often undyed
lenza	ribbon or cord worn around the head, often decorated with jewels
iacyntho (iocinto, giacinto, jacinto)	bright orange zircon
lenzuolo	bed sheet; also a type of mantle worn in Rome and surrounding towns
maglia (maglietta)	eyelet
mantellina	short mantle or cloak
mantello	mantle
misciroba	ewer
monachino	reddish brown
mongino	ample overgarment, worn in Northern Italy
morello	murrey, deep red-purple colour
mostavoliere (moscavoliere)	cloth of high quality English wool, named after its town of production Montvilliers in France
nastro	ribbon
nodi	see: *groppi*
panno (panno di lana)	woollen fabric
paonazzo	purple or violet colour
paternostro	rosary
punte	metal points to reinforce the outer ends of a ribbon
rascia	coarse wool; also: undergarment similar to the *gamurra*, made of this fabric
raso	satin
recatino	possibly a hairnet
refe	wool
rensa	linen of fine quality, named after the city of Reims (France), where it was produced
rete	hairnet made of silk or metal threads
ricco sopra riccio	gold tissue, a fabric of gold thread with different heights of gold loops that create a pattern, literally 'loop over loop'
roba	overgarment
saia	light woollen or silken twill; also: undergarment similar to the *gamurra*, made of this fabric
sbernia (sbergna, albernia, bernia)	short mantle, usually worn over one shoulder

sbiadato	pale blue colour, literally 'bleached' or 'faded'
sciugatoio (asciugatoio)	piece of linen, to wear as a veil or to cover a piece of furniture
scuffia	see: cuffia
sella	saddle-shaped headdress
sottana	undergarment, similar to a *gamurra*
spalliera	wainscoting panel, could also be used to designate textile wall covering
tabì	tabby silk, light silk in plain weave
taffeta	taffeta, smooth silk fabric of a plain weave
tanè	auburn
trinzale	veil to cover the *coazzone*
tunica	undergarment
turca	ample overgarment with an opening at the centre front, possibly of oriental origin
turchina	turquoise
vaio	vair, that is the fur of the grey squirrel; also: generic term for fur
velluto	velvet; silk fabric with a pile
velluto alto e basso	pile on pile velvet; figured velvet created by different pole heights
velluto appiciolato	polychrome figured velvet
velluto raso	voided velvet; figured velvet created by areas without pole showing the ground (often satin)
velo	veil, to be worn on the head
veste	dress, overgarment
zana	basket
zetano	satin
zibellino	sable, also: fur piece or flea fur

Bibliography

1. Used abbreviations

ASF Archivio di Stato Firenze
DBI Dizionario Biografico degli italiani

2. Leonardo's writings and their abbreviations

BL
Codex Arundel 263, British Library, London.
Carlo Pedretti (ed.), *Il Codice Arundel 263 nella British Library. Edizione in facsimile nel riordinamento cronologico dei suoi fascicoli*, 2 vols., Florence 1998.

CA
Codex Atlanticus, Bibl. Ambrosiana, Milan.
Leonardo da Vinci, *Il codice atlantico della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano*, Augusto Marinoni (ed.), 3 vol., Florence 2000.
(current folio nos. are given first, followed by the old nos. in use before restoration)

CU
Trattato della pittura, Codex Urbinas 1270, Vatican Library, Rome.

BN 2038
MS Ashburnham II, Institut de France, Paris.
Charles Ravaisson-Mollien, *Les manuscrits de Léonard de Vinci*, 6 vols., Paris 1881-91, vol. 6.

K/W
Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (ed. and trans.), *Leonardo on Painting*, New Haven / London 2001.

Lu
Heinrich Ludwig (ed. and trans.), *Das Buch von der Malerei. Lionardo da Vinci nach dem Codex Vaticanus (Urbinas) 1270*, 4 vols., Vienna 1882.

McM
A. Philip McMahon (ed. and trans.), *Treatise on Painting [Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270]*, 2 vols., Princeton NJ 1956.

Paris A to M
Ms. A to M, Institut de France, Paris.
Charles Ravaisson-Mollien, *Les manuscrits de Léonard de Vinci*, 6 vols., Paris 1881-91.
John Venerella (ed. and trans.), *The Manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci in the Institut de France*, Milan 2001.

Richter
Jean Paul Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2 vols., London 1883 (reprinted Oxford 1939, New York 1970).

3. Other, printed primary sources

Alberti 1969a
Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, Renée Neu Watkins (trans.), Columbia SC 1969.

Alberti 1969b
Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, Ruggiero Romano and Alberto Tenenti (eds.), Turin 1969.

Alberti 1972
Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture. The Latin Texts of 'De pictura' and 'De statua'*, Cecil Grayson (ed. and trans.), London 1972.

Alighieri 1867
Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (trans.), Boston 1867.

D'Arco 1845
Carlo d' Arco, 'Notizie di Isabella Estense moglie a Francesco Gonzaga. Aggiuntivi molti documenti inediti che si riferiscono alla stessa signora, all'istoria di Mantova, e a quella generale d'Italia', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 2 Appendice 2 (1845), p. 203-326.

Badia 1896
Iodoco del Badia, 'Fidanzamento e matrimonio del secolo XV', *Miscellanea Fiorentina di Erudizione e Storia* 1 (1896), p. 189-191.

Barbaro 1915
Francesco Barbaro, *Francisci Barbari De re uxoria liber*, Attilio Gnesotto (ed.), Padua 1915.

Beltrami 1903
Luca Beltrami (ed.), *La guardaroba di Lucrezia Borgia. Dall'Archivio di Stato di Modena*, Milan 1903.

Beltrami 1919
Luca Beltrami (ed.), *Documenti e memorie riguardanti la vita e le opere di Leonardo da Vinci*, Milan 1919.

Di Benedetto 1970
Arnaldo di Benedetto (ed.), *Prose di Giovanni della Casa e altri trattatisti cinquecenteschi del compartamento*, Turin 1970.

Bernardino da Siena 1853
Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari di S. Bernardino da Siena per la prima volta messe in luce*, G. Milanesi (ed.), Siena 1853.

Bevere 1897
Riccardo Bevere, 'Vestimenti e gioielli in uso nelle provincie napoletane dal XII al XVI secolo', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* 22 (1897), p. 312-341.

Biagi 1899
Guido Biagi (ed.), *Due corredi nuziali fiorentini 1329-1493 da un libro di ricordanze dei Minerbetti*, Florence 1899.

Bicci 1976
Neri di Bicci, *Le ricordanze (10 marzo 1453 - 24 aprile 1475)*, Bruno Santi (ed.), Pisa 1976.

Brown 1982
Clifford Malcolm Brown (ed.), *Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia. Documents for the History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua*, Geneva 1982.

Calvi 1888
Felice Calvi, *Bianca Maria Sforza-Visconti, regina dei Romani, imperatrice germanica, e gli ambasciatori di Lodovico il Moro alla corte cesarea*, Milan 1888.

Cammelli 1908
Antonio Cammelli, *I sonetti faceti secondo l'autografo ambrosiano*, Erasmo Pèrcopo (ed.), Naples 1908.

Castellani 1992
Francesco Castellani, *Ricordanze*, Giovanni Ciappelli (ed.), Florence 1992.

Castiglione 1972
Baldassar Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, Ettore Bonora (ed.), Milan 1972.

Castiglione 2002
Baldassar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier. The Singleton Translation*, Daniel Javitch (ed.), Charles Southward Singleton (trans.), New York / London 2002.

Cereta 1997
Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, Diana Robin (ed. and trans.), Chicago 1997.

Ceruti 1875
Antonio Ceruti, 'Il corredo nuziale di Bianca Maria Sforza-Visconti, sposa dell'imperatore Massimiliano I', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 2 (1875), p. 51-76.

Cicero 1939
Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus. Orator*, T.E. Page, E. Capps and W.H.D. Rouse (eds.), Harry Mortimer Hubbell (trans.), London / Cambridge MA 1939.

Dei 1984
Benedetto Dei, *La cronica dall'anno 1400 all'anno 1500*, Roberto Barducci (ed.), Florence 1984.

Von Fabriczy 1891
Cornelius von Fabriczy, 'Il libro di Antonio Billi e le sue copie nella Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1891), p. 299-368.

Von Fabriczy 1893
Cornelius von Fabriczy, 'Il codice dell'Anonimo Gaddiano (Cod. maglabecchiano XVII, 17) nella Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 12 (1893) 3/4, p. 15-94, 276-334.

Ficino 1962
Marsilio Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, Paul Oskar Kristeller and Mario Sancipriano (eds.), 2 vols., Turin 1962.

Ficino 1988
Marsilio Ficino, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino. Volume 4 being a Translation of Liber V*, School of Economic Science. Language Department (ed.), London 1988.

Filarete 1965
Antonio Averlino il Filarete, *Filarete's Treatise on Architecture being the Treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, known as Filarete*, John R. Spencer (ed.), 2 vols., New Haven / London 1965.

Gandini 1893
L.A. Gandini, 'Corredo di Elisabetta Gonzaga Montefeltro', in: Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier (eds.), *Mantova e Urbino. Isabella d'Este e Elisabetta Gonzaga nelle relazioni familiari e nelle vicende politiche*, Turin 1893, p. 293-306.

Gargiolli 1868
Girolamo Gargiolli (ed.), *L'arte della seta in Firenze. Trattato del secolo XV pubblicato per la prima volta*, Florence 1868.

Gilbert 1980
Creighton Gilbert (ed.), *Italian Art 1400-1500. Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs 1980.

Gundersheimer 1972
Werner L. Gundersheimer (ed.), *Art and Life at the Court of Ercole I d'Este. The "De triumphis religionis" of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti*, Geneva 1972.

Hirdt 1981
Willi Hirdt, *Gian Giorgio Trissinos Porträt der Isabella d'Este. Ein Beitrag zur Lukian-Rezeption in Italien*, Heidelberg 1981.

Kohl and Witt 1978
Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (eds. and trans.), *The Earthly Republic. Italian Humanists on Government and Society,* Philadelphia 1978.

Landucci 1985
Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516 di Luca Landucci, continuato da un anonimo fino al 1542*, Antonio Lanza (ed.), Florence 1985.

Lomazzo 1973-75
Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti*, Roberto Paolo Ciardi (ed.), 2 vols., Florence 1973-75.

Lucian 1913-67
Lucian of Samosta, *Lucian in Eight Volumes*, E. Capps, T.E. Page and W.H.D. Ruse (eds.), A.M. Harmon (trans.), 8 vols., London / Cambridge MA 1913-67.

Luzio 1888a
Alessandro Luzio, 'Nuovi documenti su Leonardo da Vinci', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* 1 (1888), p. 45-46.

Luzio 1888b
Alessandro Luzio, 'Nuovi documenti. Ancora Leonardo da Vinci e Isabella d'Este', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* 1 (1888), p. 181-184.

Macinghi Strozzi 1877
Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai figliuoli esuli*, Cesare Guasti (ed.), Florence 1877.

Macinghi Strozzi 1997
Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi*, Heather Gregory (trans.), Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 1997.

Mazzi 1908a
Curzio Mazzi, 'Due provvisioni suntuarie fiorentine', *Rivista delle biblioteche e degli archivi. Periodico di biblioteconomia e di bibliografia* 19 (1908), p. 42-52.

Mazzi 1908b
Curzio Mazzi (ed.), *Due provvisioni suntuarie fiorentine. 29 novembre 1464 - 29 febbraio 1471 [1472]*, Florence 1908.

Merkel 1893
Carlo Merkel, 'Tre corredi milanesi del Quattrocento', *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano* 13 (1893), p. 97-184.

Merkel 1897
Carlo Merkel (ed.), *I beni della famiglia di Puccio Pucci. Inventario del secolo XV illustrato. Miscellanea nuziale Rossi-Teiss*, Trento 1897.

Michiel 2000
Marcantonio Michiel, *Notizia d'opere del disegno*, Theodor Frimmel and Cristina de Benedictis (eds.), Florence 2000.

Morelli 1881
Guido Morelli (ed.), *Deliberazione sunturaria del comune di Firenze del XIII aprile MCCCCXXXIX. Nozze Stefanini Morelli*, Florence 1881.

Morelli 1897
Leonardo Morelli, *Ricordi nuziali del MDVII. Da un libro segreto di Leonardo Morelli MDVII-MDXIII. Nozze Morelli-Carignani*, Giulio Niccolai (ed.), Florence 1897.

Müntz 1888
Eugène Müntz, *Les collections des Médicis au XVe siècle. Le musée. La bibliothèque. Le mobilier*, Paris 1888.

Naldius 1943
Naldus Naldius, *Epigrammaton liber*, Alessandro Perosa (ed.), Budapest 1943.

Overloop 1934
Eugène van Overloop (ed.), *L'inventaire Sforza 1493*, Gembloux 1934.

Parenti 1996
Marco Parenti, *Lettere*, Maria Marrese (ed.), Florence 1996.

Parenti 1870
Piero Parenti, *Delle nozze di Lorenzo de' Medici con Clarice Orsini nel 1469. Informazione di Piero Parenti Fiorentino*, G. Milanesi (ed.), Florence 1870.

Petrarca 1976
Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems. The "Rime Sparse" and Other Lyrics*, Robert M. Durling (ed. and trans.), Cambridge MA / London 1976.

Petrucci 1965
Armando Petrucci (ed.), *Il libro di ricordanze dei Corsini (1362-1457)*, Rome 1965.

Plinius 1995
Gaius Plinius Secundus maior, *Natural History Books XXXIII-XXXV*, H. Rackam (trans.), Cambridge MA 1995.

Rinuccini 1840
Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, dal 1282 al 1460 colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri suoi figli fino al 1506*, Giuseppe Aiazzi (ed.), Florence 1840.

Rosina 1983
Margherita Bellezza Rosina, 'Tre corredi milanesi inediti della seconda metà del Quattrocento', in: Chiara Buss (ed.), *Tessuti serici italiani 1450-1530*, Milan (exh. cat. Castello Sforzesco) 1983, p. 64-68.

Rucellai 1960
Giovanni Rucellai, *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo zibaldone. Il zibaldone quaresimale*, Alessandro Perosa (ed.), London 1960.

Santoro 1953
Caterina Santoro, 'Un registro di doti sforzesche', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 80 (1953) 4, p. 133-185.

Savonarola 1952
Girolamo Savonarola, *Savonarola. Prediche e scritti commentati e collegati da un racconto biografico. L'influenza del Savonarola sulla letteratura e l'arte del Quattrocento*, Mario Ferrara (ed.), Florence 1952.

Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà 1992
Marco Spallanzani and Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà (eds.), *Libro d'inventario dei beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Florence 1992.

Stapleford 2013
Richard Stapleford (ed. and trans.), *Lorenzo de' Medici at Home. The Inventory of the Palazzo Medici in 1492*, University Park Pennsylvania 2013.

Strozzi 1530
Vespasiano Strozzi, *Strozii poetae. Pater et filius*, Paris (ex officina Simonis Collinei) 1530.

Trivulzio 1876
G. G. Trivulzio, 'Gioje di Ludovico il Moro duca di Milano messe a pegno', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1876) 3, p. 530-534.

Vasari 1966-87
Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi (eds.), 6 vols., Florence 1966-87.

Vasari 1996
Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, David Ekserdijan (ed.), Gaston du C. de Vere (trans.), 2 vols., London 1996.

Verga 1898
Ettore Verga, 'Le leggi suntuarie milanesi. Gli statuti del 1396 e del 1498', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 25 (1898), p. 5-79.

Villani 1979
Giovanni Villani, *Cronica. Con le continuazioni di Matteo e Filippo*, Giovanni Aquilecchia (ed.), Turin 1979.

4. Secondary literature

Altenburg 2006
Pierre-Nicolas Sainte-Fare-Garnot (ed.), *Zu Gast im Lindenau-Museum Altenburg. 50 italienische Meisterwerke aus dem Musée Jacquemart-André*, Altenburg (exh. cat. Lindenau-Museum) 2006.

Ames-Lewis 2012
Francis Ames-Lewis, *Isabella and Leonardo. The Artistic Relation between Isabella d'Este and Leonardo da Vinci, 1500-1506*, New Haven / London 2012.

Amoretti 1804
Carlo Amoretti, *Memorie storiche su la vita, gli studj, e le opere di Lionardo da Vinci*, Milan 1804.

Anderson 1979
Ruth Matilda Anderson, *Hispanic Costume 1480-1530*, New York 1979.

Andres 1999
Katharina Andres, *Antike Physiognomie in Renaissanceporträts*, Frankfurt am Main 1999.

Arasse 1997
Daniel Arasse, *Léonard de Vinci. Le rythme du monde*, Paris 1997.

Baker and Henry 1994
Christopher Baker and Tom Henry (eds.), *The National Gallery. Complete Illustrated Catalogue*, London (cat. National Gallery) 1994.

Baldi 1983
Patrizia Baldi, 'L'abito civile, nei ritratti di Raffaello, quale segno estetico-culturale dell'artista e della società del suo tempo', in: Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal Pogetto and Paolo Dal Pogetto (eds.), *Urbino e le Marche prima e dopo Raffaello*, Urbino (exh. cat. Palazzo Ducale) 1983, p. 237-240.

Baldi 2006
Patrizia Baldi, 'La gamurra fiorentina nella prima metà del Quattrocento', in: Laura Dal Prà and Paolo Peri (eds.), *Dalla testa ai piedi. Costume e moda in età gotica*, Trento 2006, p. 283-349.

Bambach 1991
Carmen C. Bambach, 'Leonardo, Tagliente and Dürer. "La scienza del far di groppi"', *Achademia Leonardi Vinci. Journal of Leonardo Studies and Bibliography of Vinciana* 4 (1991), p. 72-98.

Bambach 1999
Carmen C. Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Renaissance Workshop. Theory and Practice, 1300-1600*, Cambridge 1999.

Bambach 2003
Carmen C. Bambach, 'Documented Chronology of Leonardo's Life and Work', in: Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2003, p. 227-241.

Baxandall 1972
Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy. A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford 1972.

Bayonne 2004
Françoise Viatte and Varena Forcione (eds.), *Léonard de Vinci. La collection du musée Bonnat à Bayonne*, Bayonne (exh. cat. Musée Bonnat) 2004.

Béguin 1983
Sylvie Béguin, *Léonard de Vinci au Louvre*, Paris 1983.

Belozerskaya 2002
Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance. Burgundian Arts across Europe*, Cambridge 2002.

Berlin / New York 2011
Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelman (eds.), *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, Berlin / New York (exh. cat. Bode Museum / Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2011.

Bern / Bruges / Vienna 2009
Susan Marti, et al. (eds.), *Karel de Stoute (1433-1477). Pracht en praal in Bourgondië*, Bern / Bruges / Vienna (exh. cat. Historisches Museum / Groeningemuseum / Kunsthistorisches Museum) 2009.

Bestor 1999
Jane Fair Bestor, 'Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss's Essay on the Gift', *Past and Present* 164 (1999), p. 6-46.

Binaghi Olivari 1979
Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari, 'I francesi a Milano (1499-1525). Arti figurative e moda', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 5 (1979), p. 85-116.

Binaghi Olivari 1983
Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari, 'La moda a Milano al tempo di Ludovico il Moro', in: Giulia Bologna (ed.), *Milano nell'età di Ludovico il Moro. Atti del convegno internazionale 28 febbraio - 4 marzo 1983*, 2 vols., Milan 1983, vol. 2, p. 633-650.

Birbari 1975
Elizabeth Birbari, *Dress in Italian Painting 1460-1500*, London 1975.

Black 2009
Jane Black, *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan*, Oxford 2009.

Boccherini 1999
Tamara Boccherini (ed.), *Il museo del tessuto di Prato*, Prato (cat. Museo del tessuto) 1999.

Bode 1882
Wilhelm Bode, 'Die italienischen Skulpturen der Renaissance in den Königlichen Museen. II. Bildwerke des Andrea del Verrocchio', *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 3 (1882), p. 91-105, 235-253, 255-267.

Bode 1903
Wilhelm Bode, 'Leonardos Bildnis der Ginevra dei Benci', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 14 (1903) 11, p. 274-276.

Bolzoni 2008
Lina Bolzoni, *Poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento*, Rome 2008.

Bolzoni 2010
Lina Bolzoni, *Il cuore di cristallo. Ragionamenti d'amore, poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento*, Turin 2010.

Borsook and Offerhaus 1981
Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita, Florence. History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel*, Doornspijk 1981.

Boskovits and Brown 2003
Miklós Boskovits and David Alan Brown (eds.), *Italian Paintings of the Fifteenth Century*, Washington (cat. National Gallery of Art) 2003.

Bourdieu 1979
Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Paris 1979.

Breck 1914
Joseph Breck, 'A Double Portrait by Fra Filippo Lippi', *Art in America* 2 (1914), p. 44-55.

Bridgeman 1986
Jane Bridgeman, *Aspects of Dress and Ceremony in Quattrocento Florence*, PhD Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art 1986.

Bridgeman 1998
Jane Bridgeman, '"Condecenti et netti...". Beauty, Dress and Gender in Italian Renaissance Art', in: Mary Rogers and Francis Ames-Lewis (eds.), *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art*, Aldershot / Vermont 1998, p. 44-51.

Bridgeman 2000
Jane Bridgeman, '"Pagare le pompe". Why Quattrocento Sumptuary Laws did not Work', in: Letizia Panizza (ed.), *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, Oxford 2000, p. 209-226.

Brown 1983
David Alan Brown, 'Leonardo and the Idealized Portrait in Milan', *Arte Lombarda* 67 (1983), p. 102-116.

Brown 1990
David Alan Brown, 'Leonardo and the Ladies with the Ermine and the Book', *Artibus et Historiae* 11 (1990) 22, p. 47-61.

Brown 1992
Katherine Reynolds Brown, 'Six Gothic Brooches at the Cloisters', in: Elizabeth C. Parker (ed.), *The Cloisters. Studies in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary*, New York 1992, p. 409-419.

Brown 1994
David Alan Brown, 'Verrocchio and Leonardo. Studies for the Giostra', in: Elizabeth Cropper (ed.), *Florentine Drawing at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1992*, Bologna 1994, p. 99-109.

Brown 1998
David Alan Brown, *Leonardo da Vinci. Origins of a Genius*, New Haven / London 1998.

Brown 2001
David Alan Brown, 'Introduction', in: David Alan Brown (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty. Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Other Portraits of Women*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 2001, p. 11-23.

Brown 2011
Beverly Louise Brown, 'Portraiture at the Courts of Italy', in: Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelman (eds.), *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, Berlin / New York (exh. cat. Bode Museum / Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2011, p. 26-47.

Bruges 1998
Maximiliaan P.J. Martens (ed.), *Brugge en de renaissance. Van Memling tot Pourbus*, 2 vols., Bruges (exh. cat. Sint-Janshospitaal) 1998.

Bruggeman 1997
Martine Bruggeman, *Kant in Europa. Een historisch overzicht vanaf het ontstaan van de kant tot aan het interbellum*, Bruges 1997.

Budapest 2009
Dóra Sallay, Vilmos Tátrai and Axel Vécsey (eds.), *Botticelli to Titian. Two Centuries of Italian Masterpieces*, Budapest (exh. cat. Szépművészeti Múzeum) 2009.

Bull 1992
David Bull, 'Two Portraits by Leonardo. "Ginevra de' Benci" and the "Lady with an Ermine"', *Artibus et Historiae* 13 (1992) 25, p. 67-83.

Bull 1998
David Bull, 'Analisi scientifiche', in: Barbara Fabjan and Pietro C. Marani (eds.), *Leonardo. La dama con l'ermellino*, Rome / Milan / Florence (exh. cat. Palazzo del Quirinale / Pinacoteca di Brera / Palazzo Pitti) 1998, p. 83-90.

Burckhardt 1860
Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch*, Basel 1860.

Van Buren 2011
Anne H. van Buren with Roger S. Wieck, *Illuminating Fashion. Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325-1515*, New York 2011.

Burke 2008
Jill Burke, 'Agostino Vespucci's Marginal Note about Leonardo da Vinci in Heidelberg', *Leonardo da Vinci Society Newsletter* (2008) 30, p. 3-4.

Butazzi 1977
Grazietta Butazzi, *Il costume in Lombardia*, Milan 1977.

Butazzi 1983
Grazietta Butazzi, 'Elementi italiani nella moda sullo scorcio tra XV e XVI secolo', in: Chiara Buss (ed.), *Tessuti serici italiani 1450-1530*, Milan (exh. cat. Castello Sforzesco) 1983, p. 56-63.

Butazzi 1998
Grazietta Butazzi, 'Note per un ritratto. Vesti e acconciature della Dama con l'ermellino', in: Barbara Fabjan and Pietro C. Marani (eds.), *Leonardo. La dama con l'ermellino*, Rome / Milan / Florence (exh. cat. Palazzo del Quirinale / Pinacoteca di Brera / Palazzo Pitti) 1998, p. 67-71.

Butterfield 1997
Andrew Butterfield, *The Sculptures of Andrea del Verrocchio*, New Haven / London 1997.

Byam Shaw 1967
James Byam Shaw (ed.), *Paintings by Old Masters at Christ Church, Oxford*, Oxford (cat. Christ Church Picture Gallery) 1967.

Cadogan 2000
Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio. Artist and Artisan*, New Haven / London 2000.

Caldwell 2004
Dorigen Caldwell, *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Impresa in Theory and Practice*, New York 2004.

Callman 1974
Ellen Callman, *Apollonio di Giovanni*, Oxford 1974.

Campbell 2000
Caroline Campbell, 'Revaluing Dress in History Paintings for Quattrocento Florence', in: Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd (eds.), *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, Aldershot 2000, p. 137-145.

Campbell 1990
Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits. European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries*, New Haven / London 1990.

Campbell 2004
Stephen J. Campbell, *The Cabinet of Eros. Renaissance Mythological Painting and the 'studiolo' of Isabella d'Este*, New Haven / London 2004.

Carnesecchi 1909
Carlo Carnesecchi, 'Il ritratto Leonardesco di Ginevra Benci', *Rivista d'arte* 6 (1909), p. 281-296.

Cartwright 1903
Julia Cartwright, *Isabella d'Este Marchioness of Mantua 1474-1539. A Study of the Renaissance*, 2 vols., London 1903.

Cartwright 1905
Julia Cartwright, *Beatrice d'Este. Duchess of Milan 1475-1497*, London 1905.

Casciu, Chiarini and Padovani 2003
Stefano Casciu, Marco Chiarini and Serena Padovani (eds.), *La Galleria Palatina e gli appartamenti reali di Palazzo Pitti. Catalogo dei dipinti*, 2 vols., Florence (cat. Palazzo Pitti) 2003.

Cecchi 2003
Alessandro Cecchi, 'New Light on Leonardo's Florentine Patrons', in: Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2003, p. 121-139.

Cecchi 2008
Alessandro Cecchi, *Botticelli*, Milan 2008.

Chabot 1994
Isabella Chabot, "'La sposa in nero". La ritualizzazione del lutto delle vedove fiorentine (secoli XIV-XV)', *Quaderni storici* 86 (1994) 2, p. 421-462.

Ciappelli 2000
Giovanni Ciappelli, 'Family Memory. Functions, Evolution, Recurrences', in: Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (eds.), *Art, Memory and Family in Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge 2000, p. 26-38.

Cirillo Mastrocinque 1968
Adelaide Cirillo Mastrocinque, *Moda e costume nella vita napoletana del rinascimento*, Naples 1968.

Clark 1939
Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci. An Account of his Development as an Artist*, Cambridge 1939.

Clark 1973
Kenneth Clark, 'Mona Lisa', *The Burlington Magazine* 115 (1973) 840, p. 144-151.

Clark 1988
Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci*, London 1988.

Clark and Pedretti 1968-69
Kenneth Clark and Carlo Pedretti, *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, 3 vols., London 1968-69.

Coceva 1889
Giuseppe Coceva, 'L'iconografia di Beatrice d'Este', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* 2 (1889) 5, p. 264-267.

Coonin 2009
Arnold Victor Coonin, 'The Most Elusive Woman in Renaissance Art. A Portrait of Marietta Strozzi', *Artibus et Historiae* 30 (2009) 59, p. 41-64.

Corio 1857
Bernardino Corio, *La storia di Milano*, 3 vols., Milan 1857.

Cotte 2014
Pascal Cotte, *Lumière on the Lady with an Ermine. Unprecedented Discoveries*, n.p. 2014.

Covini 2008
Maria Nadia Covini, 'Beatrice d'Este , i figli del Moro, e la Pala Sforzesca. Arte e politica dinastica', in: Luisa Giordano (ed.), *Beatrice d'Este 1475-1497*, Pisa 2008, p. 91-109.

Cox-Rearick 1995
Janet Cox-Rearick, *The Collection of Francis I. Royal Treasures*, Antwerp 1995.

Craven 1997
Jennifer E. Craven, *A New Historical View of the Independent Female Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting*, PhD Thesis, University of Pittsburgh 1997.

Croizat 2007
Yassana C. Croizat, "'Living Dolls". François Ier Dresses His Women', *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007) 1, p. 94-130.

Cropper 1976
Elizabeth Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style', *The Art Bulletin* 58 (1976) 3, p. 374-394.

Cropper 1986
Elizabeth Cropper, 'The Beauty of Women. Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture', in: Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers (eds.), *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Chicago 1986, p. 175-190.

Cunnington and Lucas 1972
Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Deaths*, London 1972.

Currie 2000
Elizabeth Currie, 'Prescribing Fashion. Dress, Politics and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Conduct Literature', *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 4 (2000) 2, p. 157-177.

Cust 1914
Lionel Cust, 'Notes on Pictures in the Royal Collections-XXIX. On Two Portraits of Isabella d'Este', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 25 (1914) 137, p. 286-291.

Damianaki 2000
Chrysa Damianaki, *The Female Portrait Busts of Francesco Laurana*, Rome 2000.

Davies 1961
Martin Davies (ed.), *The Earlier Italian Schools*, London (cat. National Gallery) 1961.

Dempsey 1992
Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent*, Princeton NJ 1992.

Dempsey 2012
Charles Dempsey, *The Early Renaissance and Vernacular Culture*, Cambridge MA 2012.

DePrano 2008
Maria DePrano, "'No painting on earth would be more beautiful". An analysis of Giovanna degli Albizzi's portrait inscription', *Renaissance Studies* 22 (2008) 5, p. 617-641.

Van Dijk 2008
Sara van Dijk, 'De lenzuolo. Een mantel uit Rome voor huwbare meisjes, huisvrouwen en heiligen', *Kostuum. Jaaruitgave van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Kostuum, Mode en Streekdracht* (2008), p. 5-15.

Dina 1921
Achille Dina, 'Isabella d'Aragona. Duchessa di Milano e di Bari', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 48 (1921) 3-4, p. 269-437.

Douglas 1944
Robert Langton Douglas, *Leonardo da Vinci. His Life and Pictures*, Chicago 1944.

Duits 1999
Rembrandt Duits, 'Figured Riches. The Value of Gold Brocades in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 62 (1999), p. 60-92.

Duits 2008
Rembrandt Duits, *Gold Brocade in Renaissance Painting. A Study in Material Culture*, London 2008.

Dunkerton 2011
Jill Dunkerton, 'Leonardo in Verrocchio's Workshop. Re-examining the Technical Evidence', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 32 (2011), p. 4-31.

Dunkerton and Syson 2010
Jill Dunkerton and Luke Syson, 'In Search of Verrocchio the Painter. The Cleaning and Examination of "The Virgin and Child with Two Angels"', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 31 (2010), p. 4-41.

Edler de Roover 1966
Florence Edler de Roover, 'Andrea Banchi, Florentine Silk Manufacturer and Merchant in the Fifteenth Century', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 (1966), p. 223-285.

Ehrman 2011
Edwina Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress. 300 Years of Bridal Fashion*, London 2011.

Ettlinger 1994
Helen S. Ettlinger, '"Visibilis et Invisibilis". The Mistress in Italian Renaissance Court Society', *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994) 4, p. 770-792.

Evans 1952
Joan Evans, *Dress in Medieval France*, Oxford 1952.

Fabriczy 1895
Cornelius von Fabriczy, 'Andrea del Verrocchio ai servizi de' Medici', *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* 1 (1895) 3, p. 163-176.

Farago 1992
Claire J. Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone. A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas*, Leiden 1992.

Feinberg 2011
Larry J. Feinberg, *The Young Leonardo. Art and Life in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, New York 2011.

Ferrari 2008
Alessandra Ferrari, 'Le lettere di Beatrice d'Este. I. Dal privato al pubblico', in: Luisa Giordano (ed.), *Beatrice d'Este 1475-1497*, Pisa 2008, p. 33-47.

Fiorentini Capitani and Ricci 1992
Aurora Fiorentini Capitani and Stefania Ricci, 'Considerazioni sull'abbigliamento del Quattrocento in Toscana', in: Aurora Fiorentini Capitani and Stefania Ricci (eds.), *Il costume al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico. Prato e il suo territorio*, Prato (exh. cat. Palazzo Pretorio) 1992, p. 51-75.

Fletcher 1981
Jennifer M. Fletcher, 'Isabella d'Este, Patron and Collector', in: David Chambers and Jane Martineau (eds.), *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, London (exh. cat. Victoria & Albert Museum) 1981, p. 51-63.

Fletcher 1989
Jennifer M. Fletcher, 'Bernardo Bembo and Leonardo's Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci', *The Burlington Magazine* 131 (1989) 1041, p. 811-816.

Floerke 1917
Hanns Floerke, *Die Moden der Italienischen Renaissance*, Munich 1917.

Florence 1977
Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal Pogetto (ed.), *L'Oreficeria nella Firenze del Quattrocento*, Florence (exh. cat. Università di Firenze) 1977.

Florence 1992
Annamaria Petrioli Tofani, *Il disegno fiorentino del tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Florence (exh. cat. Uffizi, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe) 1992.

Florence 2003
Maria Sframeli (ed.), *I gioielli dei Medici dal vero e in ritratto*, Florence (exh. cat. Museo degli Argenti) 2003.

Florence 2008
Bert W. Meijer (ed.), *Firenze e gli antichi Paesi Bassi 1430-1530. Dialoghi tra artisti da Jan van Eijck a Ghirlandaio, da Memling a Raffaello*, Florence (exh. cat. Galleria Palatina) 2008.

Florence 2013
Marilena Tamassia (ed.), *Il rinascimento da Firenze a Parigi. Andata e ritorno. I tesori del Museo Jacquemart-André tornano a casa. Botticelli, Donatello, Mantegna, Paolo Uccello*, Florence (exh. cat. Villa Bardini) 2013.

Florence / Paris 2013
Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Marc Bormand (eds.), *La Primavera del Rinascimento. La scultura e le arti a Firenze 1400-1460*, Florence / Paris (exh. cat. Palazzo Strozzi / Musée du Louvre) 2013.

Frankfurt 2009
Andreas Schumacher (ed.), *Botticelli. Bildnis - Mythos - Andacht*, Frankurt am Main (exh. cat. Städel Museum) 2009.

Frick 2002
Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence. Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing*, Baltimore 2002.

Frick 2004
Carole Collier Frick, 'Francesco Barbaro's "De re uxoria". A Silent Dialogue for a Young Medici Bride', in: Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée (eds.), *Printed Voices. The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue*, Toronto 2004, p. 193-205.

Fry 1911
Roger Fry, 'On a Profile Portrait by Baldovinetti', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 18 (1911) 96, p. 311-308.

Garrard 1992
Mary D. Garrard, 'Leonardo da Vinci. Female Portraits, Female Nature', in: Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *The Expanding Discourse. Feminism and Art History*, New York 1992, p. 58-85.

Garrard 2006
Mary D. Garrard, 'Who Was Ginevra de' Benci? Leonardo's Portrait and Its Sitter Recontextualized', *Artibus et Historiae* 27 (2006) 53, p. 23-56.

Gautier, Houssaye and Saint-Victoir 1864
Théophile Gautier, Arsène Houssaye and Paul de Saint-Victoir, *Les dieux et demi-dieux de la peinture*, Paris 1864.

Gerulaitis 1976
Leonardas Vytautas Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth Century Venice*, London 1976.

Giannetto 1985
Nella Giannetto, *Bernardo Bembo. Umanista e politico veneziano*, Florence 1985.

Gibson 1991
Eric Gibson, 'Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci. The Restoration of a Renaissance Masterpiece', *Apollo* 133 (1991), p. 161-165.

Gielly 1939
Louis Gielly, 'Un Ghirlandaio inconnu. Le portrait présumé de Giovanna degli Albizzi', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 21 (1939), p. 194-195.

Giordano 2008
Luisa Giordano, 'La "Ill.ma Consorte" di Ludovico Sforza', in: Luisa Giordano (ed.), *Beatrice d'Este 1475-1497*, Pisa 2008, p. 63-89.

Giordano 2011
Luisa Giordano, 'Milan. The Visconti and Sforza families (1395-1535)', in: Marco Folin (ed.), *Courts and Courtly Arts in Renaissance Italy. Arts, Culture and Politics, 1395-1530*, Woodbridge 2011, p. 113-140.

Glasser 1977
Hannelore Glasser, *Artists' Contracts of the Early Renaissance*, New York / London 1977.

Gnignera 2010
Elisabetta Gnignera, *I soperchi ornamenti. Copricapi e acconciature femminili nell'Italia del Quattrocento*, Siena 2010.

Goffen 1997
Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women*, New Haven / London 1997.

Gombrich 1954
Ernst H. Gombrich, 'Leonardo's Grotesque Heads. Prolegomena to their Study', in: Achille Marazza (ed.), *Leonardo. Saggi e ricerche*, Rome 1954, p. 197-219.

González Mozo 2014
Ana González Mozo, 'The Copy of the Gioconda', in: Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's Technical Practice. Paintings, Drawings and Influence*, Paris 2014, p. 194-202.

Gordenker 2001
Emilie E.S. Gordenker, *Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) and the Representation of Dress in Seventeenth-Century Portraiture*, Turnhout 2001.

Gori 2001
Orsola Gori, 'Contessina moglie di Cosimo "Il Vecchio". Lettere familiari', in: Andrea Degrandi (ed.), *Scritti in onore di Girolamo Arnaldi offerti dalla Scuola nazionale di studi medievali*, Rome 2001, p. 233-259.

Gould 1975
Cecil Gould, *Leonardo. The Artist and the Non-Artist*, Boston 1975.

Greenstein 2004
Jack M. Greenstein, 'Leonardo, Mona Lisa and "La Gioconda". Reviewing the Evidence', *Artibus et Historiae* 25 (2004) 50, p. 17-38.

Gregori 1994
Mina Gregori (ed.), *Uffizi e Pitti. I dipinti delle gallerie fiorentine*, Florence (cat. Galleria degli Uffizi / Galleria Palatina) 1994.

Groeneweg 1997
Irene Groeneweg, 'Court and City. Dress in the Age of Frederik Hendrik and Amalia', in: Marika Keblusek and Jori Zijlmans (eds.), *Princely Display. The Court of Frederik Hendrik of Orange and Amalia van Solms*, The Hague (exh. cat. Historisch Museum) 1997, p. 201-218.

Hatfield 1978
Rab Hatfield, 'Sherlock Holmes and the riddle of "Niccolò da Uzzano"', in: Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus (eds.), *Essays presented to Myron P. Gilmore*, 2 vols., Florence 1978, vol. 2, p. 219-238.

Hendy 1974
Philip Hendy (ed.), *European and American Paintings in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum*, Boston (cat. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum) 1974.

Herald 1981
Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance Dress in Italy 1400-1500*, London 1981.

Hewett 1907
A. Edith Hewett, 'A Newly Discovered Portrait by Ambrogio de Predis', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10 (1907) 47, p. 309-313.

Hickson 2009
Sally Hickson, '"To see ourselves as others see us". Giovanni Francesco Zaninello of Ferrara and the Portrait of Isabella d'Este by Francesco Francia', *Renaissance Studies* 23 (2009) 3, p. 288-310.

Hickson 2012
Sally Hickson, *Women, Art and Architectural Patronage in Renaissance Mantua*, Farnham 2012.

Hill 1930
George Francis Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, 2 vols., London 1930.

Hills 1980
Paul Hills, 'Leonardo and Flemish Painting', *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (1980) 930, p. 609-615.

Hoff 1995
Ursula Hoff (ed.), *European Paintings before 1800 in the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne (cat. National Gallery of Victoria) 1995.

Holmes 2000
Megan Holmes, 'Giovanni Benci's Patronage of the Nunnery, Le Murate', in: Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (eds.), *Art, Memory and Family in Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge 2000, p. 114-134.

Holmes 2003
Megan Holmes, 'Neri di Bicci and the Commodification of Artistic Values in Florentine Painting (1450-1500)', in: Marcello Fantoni, Louisa Chevalier Matthew and Sara F. Matthews Grieco (eds.), *The Art Market in Italy 15th-17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell' Arte in Italia sec. XV-XVII*, Modena 2003, p. 213-223.

Hoshino 1980
Hidetoshi Hoshino, *L'arte della lana in Firenze nel basso medioevo. Il commercio della lana e il mercato dei panni fiorentini nei secoli XIII-XV*, Florence 1980.

Hudson 2008
Hugh Hudson, *Paolo Uccello. Artist of the Florentine Renaissance Republic*, Saarbrücken 2008.

Izbicki 1989
Thomas Izbicki, 'Pyres of Vanities. Mendicant Preaching on the Vanity of Women and its Lay Audience', in: Thomas L. Amos, Eugene A. Green and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (eds.), *De Ore Domini. Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, Kalamazoo MI 1989, p. 211-234.

James 2012
Carolyn James, 'Marriage by Correspondence. Politics and Domesticity in the Letters of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490-1519', *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012) 2, p. 321-352.

Jestaz 1999
Bertrand Jestaz, 'François Ier, Salaì et les tableaux de Léonard', *Revue de l'art* 126 (1999) 4, p. 68-72.

Jones and Stallybrass 2000
Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, Cambridge 2000.

Keith 2011
Larry Keith, 'In Pursuit of Perfection. Leonardo's Painting Technique', in: Luke Syson (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of Milan*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2011, p. 54-77.

Kemp 1981
Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, London 1981.

Kemp 1985
Martin Kemp, 'Leonardo da Vinci. Science and the Poetic Impulse', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 133 (1985), p. 196-213.

Kemp and Cotte 2010
Martin Kemp and Pascal Cotte, *Leonardo da Vinci. "La Bella Principessa". The Profile Portrait of a Milanese Woman*, London 2010.

Klapisch-Zuber 1985
Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'The Griselda Complex. Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento', in: Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (ed.), *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago 1985, p. 213-246.

Klapisch-Zuber 1989
Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'Le "zane" della sposa. La donna e il suo corredo', in: Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (ed.), *La famiglia e le donne nel rinascimento a Firenze*, Bari 1989, p. 193-211.

Knauer 2009
Elfriede R. Knauer, 'Leonardo da Vinci's Gioconda and the Yellow Shawl. Observations on Female Portraits in the Renaissance', *Raccolta Vinciana* 33 (2009), p. 1-79.

Kolsky 1984
Stephen Kolsky, 'Images of Isabella d'Este', *Italian Studies* 49 (1984), p. 47-62.

Kovesi 2013
Catherine Kovesi, 'Luxury in the Renaissance. A Contribution to the Etymology of a Concept', in: Machtelt Israëls and Louis A. Waldman (eds.), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, 2 vols., 2013, vol. 2, p. 236-242.

Kovesi Killerby 2002
Catherine Kovesi Killerby, *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200-1500*, Oxford 2002.

Kräftner 2004
Johann Kräftner (ed.), *Liechtenstein Museum Vienna. The collections*, Vienna (cat. Liechtenstein Museum) 2004.

Kress 1995
Susanne Kress, *Das autonome Porträt in Florenz. Studien zu Ort, Funktion un Entwicklung des florentinischen Bildnisses im Quattrocento*, 2 vols., PhD Thesis, Justus-Liebig-Universität 1995.

Kwakkelstein 1994
Michael W. Kwakkelstein, *Leonardo da Vinci as a Physiognomist. Theory and Drawing Practice*, Leiden 1994.

Kwakkelstein 2011a
Michael W. Kwakkelstein, 'Did Leonardo always practise what he preached? Discrepancies between Leonardo's Didactic Views on Painting and his Artistic Practice', *Letteratura & Arte. Rivista annuale* 9 (2011), p. 107-136.

Kwakkelstein 2011b
Michael W. Kwakkelstein, *Het wezen van de schilderkunst volgens Leonardo da Vinci. Over de verhouding tussen kunsttheorie en de praktijk van de schilder in de Renaissance*, Utrecht 2011.

Kwiatkowski 1955
Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, *La dame à l'hermeline de Leonardo da Vinci*, Warsaw 1955.

Kwiatkowski 1991
Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, 'Scientific Analysis of the *Lady with an Ermine*', in: Józef Grabski and Janusz Wałek (eds.), *Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Lady with an Ermine from the Czartoryski*

Collection National Museum, Cracow, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 1991, p. 38-41.

Lachi 1995
Chiara Lachi, *Il Maestro della Natività di Castello*, Florence 1995.

Lambert 2006
Elsa Lambert, 'Photographic Imaging', in: Jean-Pierre Mohen, Michel Menu and Bruno Mottin (eds.), *Mona Lisa. Inside the Painting*, New York 2006, p. 76-81.

Land 1994
Norman E. Land, *The Viewer as Poet. The Renaissance Response to Art*, University Park, PA 1994.

Langedijk 1968
Karla Langedijk, *De portretten van de Medici tot omstreeks 1600*, PhD Thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam 1968.

Laval, Pagès-Camagna and Walter 2006
Eric Laval, Sandrine Pagès-Camagna and Philippe Walter, 'Analysis of the Paint Layer', in: Jean-Pierre Mohen, Michel Menu and Bruno Mottin (eds.), *Mona Lisa. Inside the Painting*, New York 2006, p. 86-89.

Le Roux de Lincy 1860
Antoine Jean Victor Le Roux de Lincy, *Vie de la reine Anne de Bretagne. Femme des rois de France Charles VIII et Louis XII. Suivie de lettres inédites & de documents originaux*, 4 vols., Paris 1860.

Leone de Castris 2006
Pierluigi Leone de Castris, 'Il ritratto nella pittura del Cinquecento a Napoli', in: Nicola Spinosa (ed.), *Tiziano e il ritratto di corte da Raffaello ai Carracci*, Naples (exh. cat. Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte) 2006, p. 84-90.

Levey 1983
Santina M. Levey, *Lace. A History*, London 1983.

Levi Pisetzky 1957
Rosita Levi Pisetzky, 'L'apogeo dell'eleganza milanese', in: *Storia di Milano VIII. Tra Francia e Spagna*, Milan 1957, vol. 8, p. 721-776.

Levi Pisetzky 1964-69
Rosita Levi Pisetzky, *La storia del costume in Italia*, 5 vols., Milan 1964-69.

Lewin 1993
Agatha Lewin, *Dürer and Costume. A Study of the Dress in some of Dürer's Paintings and Drawings*, PhD Thesis, University of London / Courtauld Institute of Art 1993.

Lipman 1936
Jean Lipman, 'The Florentine Profile Portrait in the Quattrocento', *The Art Bulletin* 18 (1936) 1, p. 54-102.

London 1999
Patricia Lee Rubin (ed.), *Renaissance Florence. The Art of the 1470s*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 1999.

London 2001
Luke Syson and Dillian Gordon (eds.), *Pisanello. Painter to the Renaissance Court*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2001.

London 2002a
Anne Hollander, *Fabric of Vision. Dress and Drapery in Painting*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2002.

London 2002b
Martin Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Divine and the Grotesque*, London (exh. cat. The Royal Collection) 2002.

London 2008
Lorne Campbell, et al. (eds.), *Renaissance Faces. Van Eyck to Titian*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2008.

London 2011
Luke Syson (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of Milan*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2011.

London / Florence 2010
Hugo Chapman and Marzia Faietti (eds.), *Fra Angelico to Leonardo. Italian Renaissance Drawings*, London / Florence (exh. cat. British Museum / Galleria degli Uffizi) 2010.

Lopez 2008
Guido Lopez, *Festa di nozze per Ludovico il Moro. Fasti nuziali e intrighi di potere alla corte degli Sforza, tra Milano, Vigevano e Ferrara*, Milan 2008.

Lucco 2000
Mauro Lucco, 'A New Portrait by Raphael and its Historical Context', *Artibus et Historiae* 21 (2000) 41, p. 49-73.

Luchs 2012
Alison Luchs, 'Verrocchio and the Bust of Albiera degli Albizzi. Portraits, Poetry and Commemoration', *Artibus et Historiae* 33 (2012) 66, p. 75-98.

Luzio 1887
Alessandro Luzio, *I precettori d'Isabella d'Este. Appunti e documenti*, Ancona 1887.

Luzio 1900a
Alessandro Luzio, 'Arte retrospettiva. I ritratti d'Isabella d'Este', *Emporium* 11 (1900), p. 344-359, 427-442.

Luzio 1900b
Alessandro Luzio (ed.), *Un pronostico satirico di Pietro Aretino (MDXXXIIII)*, Bergamo 1900.

Luzio 1908
Alessandro Luzio, 'Isabella d'Este e Francesco Gonzaga, promessi sposi', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 9 (1908) 17, p. 34-69.

Luzio 1913
Alessandro Luzio, *La galleria dei Gonzaga, venduta all'Inghilterra nel 1627-28*, Rome 1913.

Luzio 1914
Alessandro Luzio, 'Isabella d'Este e i Borgia I', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 41 (1914) 3, p. 468-553.

Luzio and Renier 1890a
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Delle relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Ludovico e Beatrice Sforza I', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 17 (1890) 1, p. 74-119.

Luzio and Renier 1890b
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Delle relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Ludovico e Beatrice Sforza II', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 17 (1890) 2, p. 346-399.

Luzio and Renier 1890c
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Delle relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Ludovico e Beatrice Sforza III', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 17 (1890) 2, p. 619-674.

Luzio and Renier 1893
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, *Mantova e Urbino. Isabella d'Este e Elisabetta Gonzaga nelle relazioni famigliari e nelle vicende politiche*, Turin 1893.

Luzio and Renier 1896a
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Il lusso di Isabella d'Este marchesa di Mantova. Accessori e segreti della "toilette"', *Nuova antologia di lettere, arti e scienze* 65 (1896), p. 666-688.

Luzio and Renier 1896b
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Il lusso di Isabella d'Este marchesa di Mantova. Gioielli e gemme', *Nuova antologia di lettere, arti e scienze* 64 (1896), p. 294-324.

Luzio and Renier 1896c
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Il lusso di Isabella d'Este marchesa di Mantova. Il guardaroba di Isabella d'Este', *Nuova antologia di lettere, arti e scienze* 63 (1896), p. 441-469.

Luzio and Renier 1896d
Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, 'Il lusso di Isabella d'Este marchesa di Mantova. L'arredo degli appartamenti', *Nuova antologia di lettere, arti e scienze* 64 (1896), p. 261-286.

Lydecker 1987
John Kent Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence*, PhD Thesis, Johns Hopkins University 1987.

Madou 1994
Mireille Madou, 'Kleding en mode in het oeuvre van Memling', in: Dirk De Vos (ed.), *Hans Memling. Essays*, Bruges (exh. cat. Groeningemuseum) 1994, p. 50-62.

Madrid / Bruges / New York 2005
Till-Holger Borchtert (ed.), *De portretten van Memling*, Madrid / Bruges / New York (exh. cat. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza / Groeningemuseum / The Frick Collection) 2005.

Malaguzzi Valeri 1913-23
Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, *La corte di Lodovico il Moro*, 4 vols., Milan 1913-23.

Marani 1989
Pietro C. Marani, *Leonardo. Catalogo completo dei dipinti*, Florence 1989.

Marani 1998
Pietro C. Marani, 'Scheda storico-artista', in: Barbara Fabjan and Pietro C. Marani (eds.), *Leonardo. La dama con l'ermellino*, Rome / Milan / Florence (exh. cat. Palazzo del Quirinale / Pinacoteca di Brera / Palazzo Pitti) 1998, p. 76-82.

Marani 1999
Pietro C. Marani, *Leonardo. Una carriera di pittore*, Milan 1999.

Marchand 2012
Eckart Marchand, 'His Master's Voice. Painted Inscriptions in the Works of Domenico Ghirlandaio', *Artibus et Historiae* 33 (2012) 66, p. 99-120.

Martin 2006
Elisabeth Martin, 'The Painter's Palette', in: Jean-Pierre Mohen, Michel Menu and Bruno Mottin (eds.), *Mona Lisa. Inside the Painting*, New York 2006, p. 60-64.

Martin and Bergeon 1997
Elisabeth Martin and Ségolène Bergeon, 'Technique de répresentation des brocarts dans les peintures du musée du Petit Palais', in: Esther Moench (ed.), *Brocarts célestes*, Avignon (exh. cat. Musée du Petit Palais) 1997, p. 41-54.

McIver 2008
Katherine A. McIver, 'Daddy's Little Girl. Partilineal Anxiety in Two Portraits of a Renaissance Daughter', in: Andrea Pearson (ed.), *Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe. Gender, Agency, Identity*, Aldershot 2008, p. 85-106.

McMahon 1956
A. Philip McMahon, *Treatise on Painting [Codex Urbinas Latinus 1270]*, 2 vols., Princeton NJ 1956.

Mellencamp 1969
Emma H. Mellencamp, 'A Note on the Costume of Titian's Flora', *The Art Bulletin* 51 (1969) 2, p. 174-177.

Middeldorf 1977
Ulrich Middeldorf, 'Statuen und Stoffe', *Pantheon* 35 (1977), p. 10-14.

Milan 1983
Chiara Buss (ed.), *Tessuti serici italiani 1450-1530*, Milan (exh. cat. Castello Sforzesco) 1983.

Milan 2000
Eleonora Sàita (ed.), *"Io son la volpe dolorosa". Il ducato e la caduta di Ludovico il Moro, settimo duca di Milano (1494-1500)*, Milan (exh. cat. Castello Sforzesco) 2000.

Milan 2009
Chiara Buss (ed.), *Silk Gold Crimson. Secrets and Technology at the Visconti and Sforza Courts*, Milan (exh. cat. Museo Poldi Pezzoli) 2009.

Milan 2014
Andrea di Lorenzo and Aldo Galli (eds.), *Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo. "Silver and Gold, Painting and Bronze"*, Milan (exh. cat. Museo Poldi Pezzoli) 2014.

Molho 1994
Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence*, Cambridge MA 1994.

Möller 1916
Emil Möller, 'Leonardo's Bildnis der Cecilia Gallerani in der Gallerie des Fürsten Czartoryski in Krakau', *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* IX (1916), p. 313-326.

Möller 1937-38
Emil Möller, 'Leonardos Bildnis der Ginevra dei Benci', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 12 (1937-38), p. 185-192.

Monnas 1987
Lisa Monnas, 'The Artists and the Weavers. The Design of Woven Silks in Italy 1350-1550', *Apollo* 125 (1987) 304, p. 102-113, 128.

Monnas 2009
Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, Princes and Painters. Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings 1300-1550*, New Haven / London 2009.

Montalto 1922
Lina Montalto, *La corte di Alfonso I di Aragona. Vesti e gale*, Naples 1922.

Morandotti and Natale 2011
Alessandro Morandotti and Mauro Natale (eds.), *Collezione Borromeo. La galleria dei quadri dell'Isola Bella*, Isola Bella (cat. Palazzo Borromeo) 2011.

Mosher Stuard 2006
Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the Market. Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Philadelphia PA 2006.

Motta 1893
Emilio Motta, 'Ambrogio Preda e Leonardo da Vinci', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 10 (1893) 4, p. 972-996.

Mottin 2006
Bruno Mottin, 'Reading the Image', in: Jean-Pierre Mohen, Michel Menu and Bruno Mottin (eds.), *Mona Lisa. Inside the Painting*, New York 2006, p. 64-70.

Mottin 2014
Bruno Mottin, 'Leonardo's Monna Lisa in the Light of its Madrid Copy', in: Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's Technical Practice. Paintings, Drawings and Influence*, Paris 2014, p. 203-221.

Muessig 2002
Carolyn A. Muessig, *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, Leiden 2002.

Müller-Walde 1889
Paul Müller-Walde, *Leonardo da Vinci. Lebensskizze und Forschungen über sein Verhältnis zur Florentiner Kunst und zu Rafael*, Munich 1889.

Munro 1983
John H. Munro, 'The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendour', in: Negley Boyd Harte and Kenneth G. Ponting (eds.), *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe. Essays in Memory of Professor E.M. Carus-Wilson*, 1983, p. 13-70.

Müntz 1899
Eugène Müntz, *Léonard de Vinci. L'artiste, le penseur, le savant*, Paris 1899.

Musacchio 1999
Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven / London 1999.

Musacchio 2003
Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, 'The Bride and her Donora in Renaissance Florence', in: Margaret Mikesell and Adele Seeff (eds.), *Culture and Change. Attending to Early Modern Women*, Newark DE 2003, p. 177-202.

Musacchio 2008
Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *Art, Marriage & Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace*, New Haven / London 2008.

Muzzarelli 1999
Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale. Vesti e società dal XIII al XVI secolo*, Bologna 1999.

Negro and Roio 1998
Emilio Negro and Nicosetta Roio, *Francesco Francia e la sua scuola*, Modena 1998.

New York 1994
Maryan W. Ainsworth (ed.), *Petrus Christus. Renaissance Master of Bruges*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1994.

New York 2003
Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2003.

New York 2005
Keith Christiansen (ed.), *From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca. Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2005.

New York 2008
Andrea Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2008.

Newton 1975
Stella Mary Newton, *Renaissance Theatre Costume and the Sense of the Historic Past*, New York 1975.

Newton 1980
Stella Mary Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince. A Study of the Years 1340-1365*, Woodbridge / Totowa NJ 1980.

Newton 1988
Stella Mary Newton, *The Dress of the Venetians 1495-1525*, London 1988.

Niccoli and Orsi Landini 2005
Bruna Niccoli and Roberta Orsi Landini, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580. Lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza*, Florence 2005.

Nuttall 2002
Paula Nuttall, '"Lacking Only Breath". Italian Responses to Netherlandish Portraiture', in: Till-Holger Borchert (ed.), *The Age of Van Eyck. The Mediterranean World and Early Netherlandish Painting 1430-1530*, Bruges (exh. cat. Groeningemuseum) 2002, p. 198-211.

Nuttall 2004
Paula Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence. The Impact of Netherlandish Painting 1400-1500*, New Haven / London 2004.

O'Neill 1987
John P. O'Neill (ed.), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Renaissance in the North*, New York (cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1987.

Olson 2008
Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman. Self-presentation and Society*, London / New York 2008.

Orsi Landini 2010
Roberta Orsi Landini, 'The Influence of the Medici Style on European Fashion', in: Rainer C. Schwinges and Regula Schorta (eds.), *Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe / Mode und Kleidung im Europa des späten Mittelalters*, Riggisberg / Basel 2010, p. 193-208.

Orsi Landini and Westerman Bulgarella 2001
Roberta Orsi Landini and Mary Westerman Bulgarella, 'Costume in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraits of Women', in: David Alan Brown (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty. Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Other Portraits of Women*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 2001, p. 88-97.

Pallanti 2006
Giuseppe Pallanti, *Mona Lisa Revealed. The True Identity of Leonardo's Model*, Milan 2006.

Panofsky 1939
Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York 1939.

Paris 1990
Françoise Viatte (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. Die Gewandstudien*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Louvre) 1990.

Paris 2001
Patrizia Nitti, Marc Restellini and Claudio Strinati (eds.), *Raphael. Grace and Beauty*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Luxembourg) 2001.

Paris 2003a
Daniel Arasse (ed.), *Botticelli. From Lorenzo the Magnificent to Savonarola*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Luxembourg) 2003.

Paris 2003b
Françoise Viatte and Varena Forcione (eds.), *Léonard de Vinci. Dessins et manuscrits*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Louvre) 2003.

Paris 2006
Marc Bormand, Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Nicholas Penny (eds.), *Desiderio da Settignano. Sculpteur de la Renaissance florentine*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Louvre) 2006.

Paris 2012
Vincent Delieuvin (ed.), *La Sainte Anne. L'ultime chef d'oeuvre de Léonard de Vinci*, Paris (exh. cat. Musée du Louvre) 2012.

Pearce 1959
Stella Mary Pearce, 'The Study of Costume in Painting', *Studies in Conservation* 4 (1959) 4, p. 127-139.

Pedretti 1962
Carlo Pedretti, *A Chronology of Leonardo Da Vinci's Architectural Studies After 1500*, Geneva 1962.

Pedretti 1964
Carlo Pedretti, *Leonardo da Vinci on Painting. A Lost Book (Libro A)*, Berkeley / Los Angeles 1964.

Pedretti 1977
Carlo Pedretti, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci, compiled and edited from the Original Manuscripts by Jean Paul Richter*, 2 vols., Oxford 1977.

Pedretti 1978-79
Carlo Pedretti, *The Codex Atlanticus of Leonardo da Vinci. A Catalogue of its Newly Restored Sheets*, 2 vols., New York 1978-79.

Pedretti 1990a
Carlo Pedretti, 'La *Dama dell'ermelino* come allegoria politica', in: Silvia Rota Ghibaudi and Franco Barcia (eds.), *Studi politici in onore di Luigi Firpo*, 4 vols., Milan 1990, vol. 1, p. 161-181.

Pedretti 1990b
Carlo Pedretti, '"Nec ense"', *Achademia Leonardi Vinci. Journal of Leonardo Studies and Bibliography of Vinciana* 3 (1990), p. 82-90.

Penny 2004
Nicholas Penny (ed.), *The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings. Volume I. Paintings from Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona*, London (cat. National Gallery) 2004.

Perissa Torrini 2013
Annalisa Perissa Torrini, 'L'ultimo periodo in Francia. "Inventore d'ogni eleganza e sopratutto di spettacoli teatrali"', in: Annalisa Perissa Torrini (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. L'uomo universale*, Venice (exh. cat. Galleria dell'Accademia) 2013, p. 200-209.

Philips 1987
Mark Philips, *The Memoir of Marco Parenti. A Life in Medici Florence*, Princeton NJ 1987.

Poletti 2001
Federico Poletti, *Antonio e Piero Pollaiolo*, Milan 2001.

Polidori Calamandrei 1924
Egidia Polidori Calamandrei, *Le vesti delle donne fiorentine nel Quattrocento*, Florence 1924.

Pope-Hennessy 1966
John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, London / New York 1966.

Pope-Hennessy 1969
John Pope-Hennessy, *Paolo Uccello. The Complete Edition*, London / New York 1969.

Pope-Hennessy and Christiansen 1980
John Pope-Hennessy and Keith Christiansen, 'Secular Painting in 15th-Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels, and Portraits', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 38 (1980) 1, p. 2-64.

Popham 1945
Arthur E. Popham, *Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci*, New York 1945.

Popham and Wilde 1949
Arthur E. Popham and Johannes Wilde (eds.), *The Italian drawings of the XV and XVI centuries in the Collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle*, Windsor (cat. Royal Collection) 1949.

Portioli 1882
Attilio Portioli, 'La nascita di Massimiliano Sforza', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 9 (1882) 1, p. 325-334.

Potts 2005
Timothy Potts, 'Gian Cristoforo Romano's Bust of Isabella d'Este', *Apollo* 161 (2005) 1, p. 41.

Prajda 2013
Katalin Prajda, 'The Coat of Arms in Fra Filippo Lippi's Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 48 (2013), p. 73-80.

Praz 1981
Mario Praz, 'The Gonzaga Devices', in: David Chambers and Jane Martineau (eds.), *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, London (exh. cat. Victoria & Albert Museum) 1981, p. 65-72.

Prinz 1977
Wolfram Prinz, 'Dal vero o dal modello? Appunti e testimonianze sull'uso dei manichini nella pittura del Quattrocento', in: Maria Grazia Ciardi Duprè Dal Poggetto and Paolo Dal Poggetto (eds.), *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci*, 2 vols., Milan 1977, vol. 1, p. 200-208.

Rabil Jr. 1981
Albert Rabil Jr., *Laura Cereta. Quattrocento Humanist*, Birmingham NY 1981.

Radcliffe, Baker and Maek-Gérard 1992
Anthony Radcliffe, Malcolm Baker and Michael Maek-Gérard (eds.), *Renaissance and Later Sculpture, with Works of Art in Bronze*, Madrid (cat. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection) 1992.

Rainey 1985
Ronald Rainey, *Sumptuary Legislation in Renaissance Florence*, PhD Thesis, Columbia University 1985.

Randolph 1998
Adrian Randolph, 'Performing the Bridal Body in Fifteenth-Century Florence', *Art History* 21 (1998) 2, p. 182-200.

Ravaud and Eveno 2014
Elisabeth Ravaud and Myriam Eveno, 'La Belle Ferronnière. A Non Invasive Technical Examination', in: Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's Technical Practice. Paintings, Drawings and Influence*, Paris 2014, p. 126-138.

Reinach 1909
Salomon Reinach, 'La tristesse de Mona Lisa', *Bulletin des Musées de France* (1909), p. 17-22.

Reti 1968
Ladislao Reti, 'The Two Unpublished Manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci in the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid - II', *The Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968) 779, p. 81-91.

Richards 2000
John Richards, *Altichiero. An Artist and his Patrons in the Italian Trecento*, Cambridge 2000.

Ridgway 2011
Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, 'Elfriede Regina Knauer. Biographical Memoirs', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 155 (2011) 3, p. 328-334.

Rogers 1986
Mary Rogers, 'Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy', *Word & Image* 2 (1986) 4, p. 291-305.

Rogers 1988
Mary Rogers, 'The Decorum of Women's Beauty. Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the Representation of Women in Sixteenth-Century Painting', *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988) 1, p. 47-88.

Rogers and Tinagli 2005
Mary Rogers and Paola Tinagli (eds.), *Women in Italy 1350-1650. Ideals and Realities. A Sourcebook*, Manchester / New York 2005.

Rowlands 1980
Eliot W. Rowlands, 'Baldovinetti's "Portrait of a Lady in Yellow"', *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (1980) 930, p. 624-627.

Rubin 1990
Patricia Lee Rubin, 'What Men Saw. Vasari's Life of Leonardo da Vinci and the Image of the Renaissance Artist', *Art History* 13 (1990) 1, p. 34-46.

Rubin 2007
Patricia Lee Rubin, *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, New Haven / London 2007.

Rubin and Wright 1999
Patricia Lee Rubin and Alison Wright, 'Artists and Workshops', in: Patricia Lee Rubin and Alison Wright (eds.), *Renaissance Florence. The Art of the 1470s*, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 1999, p. 76-120.

Rubinstein 2000
Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Family, Memory and History', in: Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (eds.), *Art, Memory and Family in Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge 2000, p. 39-47.

Rublack 2010
Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*, Oxford 2010.

Ruda 1993
Jeffrey Ruda, *Fra Filippo Lippi. Life and Work with a Complete Catalogue*, London 1993.

San Giovanni Valdarno 1999
Laura Cavazzini (ed.), *Il fratello di Masaccio. Giovanni di Ser Giovanni detto lo Scheggia*, San Giovanni Valdarno (exh. cat. Casa Masaccio) 1999.

San Juan 1991
Rose Marie San Juan, 'The Court Lady's Dilemma. Isabella d'Este and Art Collecting in the Renaissance', *Oxford Art Journal* 14 (1991) 1, p. 67-78.

Sassoon 2001
Donald Sassoon, *Mona Lisa. History of the World's Most Famous Painting*, London 2001.

Scheid 2003
John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, Edinburgh 2003.

Schiaparelli 1921
Attilio Schiaparelli, *Leonardo ritrattista*, Milan 1921.

Schlechter 2008
Armin Schlechter, 'Ita Leonardus Vincius facit in omnibus suis picturis. Leonardo da Vincis Mona Lisa und die Cicero-Philologie von Angelo Poliziano bis Johann Georg Graevius', *IASLonline* (2008) http://www.iaslonline.de/index.php?vorgang_id=2889 (accessed: 21 May 2014).

Schmid 2002
Josef Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria. Bürgerliche 'repraesentatio' in der Cappella Tornabuoni in S. Maria Novella*, Munich 2002.

Schumacher 2009
Andreas Schumacher, 'Der Maler Sandro Botticelli. Eine Einfürung in sein Werk', in: Andreas Schumacher (ed.), *Botticelli. Bildnis - Mythos - Andacht*, Frankurt am Main (exh. cat. Städel Museum) 2009, p. 15-55.

Schweickard 2009
Wolfgang Schweickard (ed.), *Deonomasticon Italicum (DI). Dizionario storico dei derivati da nomi geografici e da nomi di persona. Vol. III. Derivati da nomi geografici: M-Q*, Tübingen 2009.

Scott 2007
Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress & Fashion*, London 2007.

Sedano Espín 2010
Ubaldo Sedano Espín, 'Reflectografía infrarroja', in: Gert Jan van der Sman (ed.), *Ghirlandaio y el Renacimiento en Florencia*, Madrid (exh. cat. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) 2010, p. 234-239.

Sheard 1992
Wendy Stedman Sheard, 'Verrocchio's Medici Tomb and the Language of Materials, with a Postscript on his Legacy in Venice', in: Steven Bule, Alan Phipp Darr and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (eds.), *Verrocchio and Late Quattrocento Italian sculpture*, Florence 1992, p. 63-90.

Shearman 1995
John Shearman, *Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, Princeton NJ 1995.

Shell and Sironi 1991
Janice Shell and Grazioso Sironi, 'Salaì and Leonardo's Legacy', *The Burlington Magazine* 133 (1991) 1055, p. 95-108.

Shell and Sironi 1992
Janice Shell and Grazioso Sironi, 'Cecilia Gallerani. Leonardo's Lady with an Ermine', *Artibus et Historiae* 13 (1992) 25, p. 47-66.

Shemek 2005
Deanna Shemek, 'Isabella d'Este and the Properties of Persuasion', in: Jane Couchman and Ann Morton Crabb (eds.), *Women's Letters across Europe 1400-1700. Form and Persuasion*, Aldershot 2005, p. 123-140.

Sherill 2006
Tawny Sherill, 'Fleas, Furs and Fashions. Zibellini as Luxury Accessories of the Renaissance', *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 2 (2006), p. 121-150.

Simons 1985
Patricia Simons, *Portraiture and Patronage in Quattrocento Florence with Special Reference to the Tornaquinci and their Chapel in S. Maria Novella*, 2 vols., PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne 1985.

Simons 1988
Patricia Simons, 'Women in Frames. The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture', *History Workshop* 25 (1988), p. 4-30.

Simons 1992
Patricia Simons, 'Women in Frames. The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture', in: Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *The Expanding Discourse. Feminism and Art History*, 1992, p. 39-57.

Simons 1995
Patricia Simons, 'Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization. Ambiguous Individualism in Representations of Renaissance Women', in: *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy*, Oxford 1995, p. 263-311.

Simons 2011-12
Patricia Simons, 'Giovanna and Ginevra. Portraits for the Tornabuoni family by Ghirlandaio and Botticelli', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 14/15 (2011-12), p. 103-135.

Van der Sman 2009
Gert Jan van der Sman, *Lorenzo & Giovanna. Schoonheid en noodlot in Florence*, Leiden 2009.

Van der Sman 2010a
Gert Jan van der Sman, 'El Retrato de Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni', in: Gert Jan van der Sman (ed.), *Ghirlandaio y el Renacimiento en Florencia*, Madrid (exh. cat. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) 2010, p. 45-55.

Van der Sman 2010b
Gert Jan van der Sman, 'Giovanna. La historia', in: Gert Jan van der Sman (ed.), *Ghirlandaio y el Renacimiento en Florencia*, Madrid (exh. cat. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza) 2010, p. 17-30.

Solmi 1904
Edmondo Solmi, 'La festa del Paradiso di Leonardo da Vinci e Bernardo Bellincione (13 gennaio 1490)', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 1 (1904) 1, p. 75-89.

Spencer 1957
John R. Spencer, 'Ut Rhetorica Pictura. A Study in Quattrocento Theory of Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957) 1/2, p. 26-44.

Strehlke 2004
Carl Brandon Strehlke (ed.), *Italian paintings 1250-1450 in the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, Philadelphia (cat. Philadelphia Museum of Art) 2004.

Syre 2006
Cornelia Syre, '"Und du sollst wissen, daß der Mensch nichts anderes ist als das Muster der Welt." Die Madonna mit der Nelke von Leonardo da Vinci', in: Cornelia Syre, Jan Schmidt and Heike Stege (eds.), *Leonardo da Vinci. Die Madonna mit der Nelke*, Munich (exh. cat. Alte Pinakothek) 2006, p. 23-59.

Syson 1996
Luke Syson, 'Zanetto Bugatto, Court Portraitist in Sforza Milan', *The Burlington Magazine* 138 (1996) 1118, p. 300-308.

Syson 1997
Luke Syson, 'Reading Faces. Gian Cristoforo Romano's Medal of Isabella d'Este', in: Cesare Mozzarelli, Robert Oresko and Leandro Ventura (eds.), *La corte di Mantova nell'età di Andrea Mantegna 1450-1550. Atti del convegno, Londra, 6-8 marzo 1992, Mantova, 28 marzo 1992*, Rome 1997, p. 281-297.

Syson 2011
Luke Syson, 'The Rewards of Service. Leonardo da Vinci and the Duke of Milan', in: Luke Syson (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci. Painter at the Court of*

Milan, London (exh. cat. National Gallery) 2011, p. 12-53.

Syson and Thornton 2001
Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue. Art in Renaissance Italy*, London 2001.

Taylor 1983
Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress. A Costume and Social History*, London 1983.

Thomas 1995
Annabel Thomas, *The Painter's Practice in Renaissance Tuscany*, Cambridge 1995.

Tinagli 1997
Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art. Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester 1997.

Toledano 1987
Ralph Toledano, *Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Pittore e scultore*, Milan 1987.

Tosi Brandi 2014
Elisa Tosi Brandi, 'Fashion, Art, History and Society in Portraits of Women by Piero del Pollaiuolo', in: Andrea di Lorenzo and Aldo Galli (eds.), *Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo. "Silver and Gold, Painting and Bronze"*, Milan (exh. cat. Museo Poldi Pezzoli) 2014, p. 103-117.

Vecce 1990
Carlo Vecce, 'La Gualanda', *Achademia Leonardi Vinci. Journal of Leonardo Studies and Bibliography of Vinciana* 3 (1990), p. 51-72.

Vecce 2003
Carlo Vecce, 'Word and Image in Leonardo's Writings', in: Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2003, p. 59-77.

Venice / Vienna 2004
Archim Gnann (ed.), *L'età di Michelangelo. Capolavori dell'Albertina*, Venice / Vienna (exh. cat. Collezione Peggy Guggenheim / Albertina) 2004.

Venturelli 1994
Paola Venturelli, 'Percorso iconologico nell'oreficeria vinciana', *Achademia Leonardi Vinci. Journal of Leonardo Studies and Bibliography of Vinciana* 7 (1994), p. 113-124.

Venturelli 1996a
Paola Venturelli, *Gioielli e gioiellieri milanesi. Storia, arte, moda (1450-1630)*, Milan 1996.

Venturelli 1996b
Paola Venturelli, 'Un gioiello per Bianca Maria Sforza e il ritratto di Washington', *Arte Lombarda* 116 (1996) 1, p. 50-53.

Venturelli 1999
Paola Venturelli, *Glossario e documenti per la gioielleria milanese (1459-1631)*, Milan 1999.

Venturelli 2000
Paola Venturelli, '"I vasi argentei, con bel smalto et oro / da lui già fatti con mirabel spesa". Oggetti preziosi in relazione al Moro e al tesoro sforzesco', in: Eleonora Sàita (ed.), *"Io son la volpe dolorosa". Il ducato e la caduta di Ludovico il Moro, settimo duca di Milano (1494-1500)*, Milan (exh. cat. Castello Sforzesco) 2000, p. 39-52.

Venturelli 2008
Paola Venturelli, '"Novarum vestium inventrix". Beatrice d'Este e l'apparire tra invenzioni e propoganda', in: Luisa Giordano (ed.), *Beatrice d'Este 1475-1497*, Pisa 2008, p. 147-159.

Venturi 1885
Adolfo Venturi, 'Relazioni artistiche tra le corti di Milano e Ferrara', *Archivio Storico Lombardo* 12 (1885) 2, p. 225-280.

Venturi 1925
Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana. IX. La pittura del Cinquecento*, 2 vols., Milan 1925.

Viatte 1999
Françoise Viatte, *Léonard de Vinci. Isabelle d'Este*, Paris 1999.

Viatte 2003
Françoise Viatte, 'The Early Drapery Studies', in: Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci Master Draftsman*, New York (exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2003, p. 110-119.

Vienna 1994
Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, Christian Beaufort-Spontin and Clifford Malcolm Brown (eds.), *"La prima donna del mondo". Isabella d'Este Fürstin und Mäzenatin der Renaissance*, Vienna (exh. cat. Kunsthistorisches Museum) 1994.

De Vos 1994
Dirk De Vos, *Hans Memling. Het volledige oeuvre*, Antwerp 1994.

Walker 1967
John Walker, 'Ginevra de' Benci by Leonardo da Vinci', *National Gallery of Art. Report and Studies in the History of Art* (1967), p. 1-38.

Walmsley 2013
Elizabeth Walmsley, 'Technical Images and Painting Technique in in Leonardo's Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci', in: Francesca Fiorani and Alessandro Nova (eds.), *Leonardo da Vinci and Optics. Theory and Pictorial Practice*, Venice 2013, p. 55-77.

Walmsley 2014
Elizabeth Walmsley, 'Leonardo's Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci. A Reading of the X-radiographs', in: Michel Menu (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci's Technical Practice. Paintings, Drawings and Influence*, Paris 2014, p. 56-71.

Warnke 1985
Martin Warnke, *Hofkünstler. Zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Künstlers*, Cologne 1985.

Washington 1991
Jay A. Levenson (ed.), *Circa 1492. Art in the Age of Exploration*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 1991.

Washington 2001
David Alan Brown (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty. Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Other Portraits of Women*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 2001.

Wasserman 1975
Jack Wasserman, *Leonardo da Vinci*, New York 1975.

Wedgwood Kennedy 1938
Ruth Wedgwood Kennedy, *Alesso Baldovinetti. A Critical & Historical Study*, New Haven 1938.

Weil-Garris Brandt 1998
Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, *Leonardo e la scultura*, Vinci 1998.

Welch 1995
Evelyn Welch, *Art and Authority in Renaissance Milan*, New Haven / London 1995.

Welch 2000
Evelyn Welch, 'New, Old and Second-Hand Culture. The Case of the Renaissance Sleeve', in: Gabriele Neher and Rupert Shepherd (eds.), *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, Aldershot 2000, p. 101-119.

Welch 2002
Evelyn Welch, 'Public Magnificence and Private Display. Giovanni Pontano's "De splendore" (1498) and the Domestic Arts', *Journal of Design History* 15 (2002) 4, p. 211-221.

Welch 2005
Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance. Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600*, New Haven / London 2005.

Welch 2008
Evelyn Welch, 'Art on the Edge. Hair and Hands in Renaissance Italy', *Renaissance Studies* 23 (2008) 3, p. 241-268.

Weppelman 2011
Stefan Weppelman, 'Some Thoughts on Likeness in Italian Early Renaissance Portraits', in: Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelman (eds.), *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, Berlin / New York (exh. cat. Bode Museum / Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2011, p. 64-76.

Whitaker and Clayton 2007
Lucy Whitaker and Martin Clayton (eds.), *The Art of Italy in the Royal Collection. Renaissance & Baroque*, London (cat. Royal Collection) 2007.

De Winkel 2006
Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy. Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings*, Amsterdam 2006.

Wohl 1993
Helmut Wohl, "Puro senza ornato'. Masaccio, Cristoforo Landini and Leonardo da Vinci', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993), p. 256-260.

Wood 2010
Jeremy Wood, *Copies and Adaptations from Renaissance and Later Artists. Italian Masters II. Titian and North Italian Artists*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, vol. 16, London / Turnhout 2010.

Woods-Marsden 1987
Joanna Woods-Marsden, '"Ritratto al naturale". Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits', *Art Journal* 46 (1987), p. 209-216.

Woods-Marsden 2001
Joanna Woods-Marsden, 'Portrait of the Lady 1430-1520', in: David Alan Brown (ed.), *Virtue and Beauty. Leonardo's Ginevra de' Benci and Other Portraits of Women*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery of Art) 2001, p. 62-87.

Woods-Marsden 2013
Joanna Woods-Marsden, 'The Sitter as "Guest". Reception of the Portrait in the Renaissance', in: Machtelt Israëls and Louis A. Waldman (eds.), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, 2 vols., 2013, vol. 1, p. 152-158.

Wright 2000
Alison Wright, 'The Memory of Faces. Representational Choices in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraiture', in: Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (eds.), *Art, Memory and Family in Renaissance Florence*, Cambridge 2000, p. 86-113.

Wright 2005
Alison Wright, *The Pollaiuolo Brothers. The Arts of Florence and Rome*, New Haven / London 2005.

Yriarte 1888
Charles Yriarte, 'Les relations d'Isabella d'Este avec Léonard de Vinci', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 37 (1888), p. 118-131.

Zaffanella 2000
Chiara Zaffanella, 'Isabella d'Este e la moda del suo tempo', *Civiltà mantovana* 35 (2000) 111, p. 66-81.

Zama 1994
Raffaella Zama, *Gli Zaganelli (Francesco e Bernardino) pittori*, Rimini 1994.

Zitzlsperger 2006
Philipp Zitzlsperger, 'Kostümkunde als Methode der Kunstgeschichte', *Kritische Berichte* 34 (2006) 1, p. 36-51.

Zitzlsperger 2008
Philipp Zitzlsperger, *Dürers Pelz und das Recht im Bild. Kleiderkunde als Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin 2008.

Zitzlsperger 2012
Philipp Zitzlsperger, 'Kleiderbilder und die Gegenwart. Gattungsübergreifende Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Personendenkmal, Historienbild und der Kleidung in der Kunst', in: David Ganz and Marius Rimmele (eds.), *Kleider machen Bilder. Vormoderne Strategien vestimentärer Bildsprache*, Berlin 2012, p. 117-138.

Zöllner 1993
Frank Zöllner, 'Leonardo's Portrait of Mona Lisa del Giocondo', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 121 (1993), p. 115-138.

Zöllner 2003a
Frank Zöllner, *Leonardo da Vinci, 1452-1519. Sämtliche Gemälde und Zeichnungen*, Cologne 2003.

Zöllner 2003b
Frank Zöllner, 'Leonardo da Vinci's Portraits. Ginevra de' Benci, Cecilia Gallerani, La Belle Ferronnière and Mona Lisa', in: Sebastiana Dudzika and Tadeusza J. Żuchowskiego (eds.), *Rafael i jego spadkobiercy. Portret klasyczny w sztuce nowozytnej Europy. Materialy ses-ji naukowej*, Toruń 2003, p. 157-183.

Żygulski 1969
Zdzisław Żygulski, 'Ze Studiów nad Daml z Gronostajem. Styl Ubioru i Wezty Leonarda', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 31 (1969) 1, p. 3-40.

Żygulski 1991
Zdzisław Żygulski, 'Costume Style and Leonardo's Knots in the Lady with an Ermine', in: Józef Grabski and Janusz Wałek (eds.), *Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Lady with an Ermine from the Czartoryski Collection National Museum, Cracow*, Washington (exh. cat. National Gallery) 1991, p. 24-27.

Summary in Dutch

'Schoonheid siert de deugd'. Kleding in de vrouwenportretten van Leonardo da Vinci
In dit proefschrift wordt de kleding in de vrouwenportretten van Leonardo da Vinci geanalyseerd. Ondanks het grote aantal studies dat sinds de negentiende eeuw aan de kunstenaar is gewijd, was aan dit onderwerp nooit eerder systematisch aandacht besteed. In de loop van zijn carrière portretteerde Leonardo tenminste vijf vrouwen: Ginevra de' Benci (ca. 1475-1480), Cecilia Gallerani (ca. 1489-1490), een anonieme vrouw bekend als *La Belle Ferronnière* (ca. 1493-1494), Isabella d'Este (1499-1500) en tot slot Lisa Gherardini (ca. 1503-1517) (afb. 1-6). In vergelijking met andere kunstenaars in deze periode portretteerde Leonardo vrouwen in opmerkelijk sobere kleding. Waarom hij de luxe stoffen en kostbare sieraden die zo prominent aanwezig zijn in andere vijftiende- en vroeg-zestiende-eeuwse damesportretten achterwege liet, is de centrale onderzoeksvraag. De vijf portretten, die vrij gelijkmatig zijn verspreid over Leonardo's werkzame leven, bieden tevens de gelegenheid om de chronologische ontwikkeling van zijn benadering van kleding in portretten te bestuderen.

Het eerste hoofdstuk biedt een overzicht van de dertien nog bewaarde Florentijnse portretten uit de periode 1440-1475 en gaat in op de daarin getoonde kleding en sieraden. De algemeen geaccepteerde hypothese dat de kostbare kleding en juwelen duiden op de huwelijkse status van de geportretteerden moet worden bijgesteld. Wanneer immers niet alleen huwelijksuitzetten, maar ook andersoortige bronnen zoals brieven, inventarissen en preken in ogenschouw worden genomen, blijkt dat zowel jonge, ongehuwde meisjes als getrouwde vrouwen luxueus gekleed gingen als de gelegenheid dat vereiste. Autonome geschilderde portretten waren in deze periode nog relatief zeldzaam in Florence en werden alleen besteld door de toplaag van de elite, bestaand uit rijke bankiers, kooplieden en adel. Kleding en sieraden droegen bij aan de eer van de familie en duiden in elk geval op de hoge status van de geportretteerden.

Hoofdstuk twee gaat in op het portret van Ginevra de' Benci. Zij was de platonische geliefde van de Venetiaanse ambassadeur Bernardo Bembo, de meest waarschijnlijke opdrachtgever. Bembo verkeerde in de kringen van de Medici en de Florentijnse neoplatonisten, met wie ook Ginevra's vader en broer nauwe banden hadden. Hoewel Ginevra's eenvoudige kleding meestal als uitzondering op de regel wordt beschouwd, toont een analyse van Florentijnse portretten tussen 1480 en 1500 dat sobere kleding een ware rage werd. *Ginevra de' Benci* is één van de allervroegste portretten met deze opzet.

De voorkeur voor sobere kleding in de schilderkunst lijkt terug te gaan op marmeren portretbustes, waarin de nadruk ligt op volume en plooival in plaats van een realistische weergave van textielmotieven en juwelen. Leonardo heeft zich later in zijn carrière intensief beziggehouden met de zogenaamde *paragone*: het door vergelijking vaststellen welke kunstvorm – schilderkunst, sculptuur of muziek – superieur is en de vraag welke het meest geschikt is om de schoonheid van de vrouw en haar daarmee onlosmakelijk verbonden deugdzaamheid weer te geven. Leonardo's voorkeur voor sobere kleding is hier niet eerder mee in verband gebracht. Toch komt het idee dat een vrouw mooier en ook deugdzamer is zonder overtollige ornamenten al voor bij klassieke auteurs, onder wie Lucianus en Cicero, en werd het overgenomen door Toscaanse dichters zoals Dante en Petrarca. Leonardo herhaalt het gedachtegoed in zijn eigen geschriften en introduceert het concept van de sober geklede, maar mooie en deugdzame vrouw

in de Florentijnse portretschilderkunst. Zowel het oorspronkelijke motto op de achterzijde van *Ginevra de' Benci*, 'VIRTUS ET HONOR' (deugd en eer) als het huidige, 'VIRTUTEM FORMA DECORAT' (schoonheid siert de deugd) onderstrepen dit schoonheidsideaal.

Het volgende hoofdstuk geeft een analyse van de kleding in de portretten uit Leonardo's eerste Milanese periode, de *Vrouw met Hermelijn* en *La Belle Ferronnière*, tegen de achtergrond van het hof van de Sforza. Hier was het vertoon van luxueuze stoffen en juwelen essentieel voor het handhaven van de eigen status, zowel in het hofceremonieel als in de portretschilderkunst. Dit vereiste een zeer precieze weergave van bestaande sieraden in portretten. Leonardo hield echter vast aan het soberheidsideaal dat hij in Florence ontwikkeld had. Hij toonde amper juwelen en deed ingrijpende aanpassingen aan de weergave van kleding. Zwaar goudbrokaat verving hij door soepele, effen stoffen die door middel van vouwen en plooien de beweging van het lichaam eronder tonen. Ondanks deze veranderingen blijft de Milanese mode, die Spaans van origine is, herkenbaar. De algemeen geaccepteerde opvatting dat deze Spaanse mode Milaan via Napels in 1490-1491 heeft bereikt, lijkt overigens niet waarschijnlijk. Al voor 1490 zijn namelijk in Noord-Italië sporen van deze mode te vinden. Op grond van de kleding van de geportretteerden kunnen de recent op stilistische gronden voorgestelde dateringen van ca. 1489-1490 voor de *Vrouw met Hermelijn* en ca. 1493-1494 voor *La Belle Ferronnière* bevestigd worden. Hoewel Leonardo sobere kleding propageerde in de schilderkunst, kleedde hij zichzelf en zijn assistenten juist luxueus. Leonardo was dan ook geen moralist die zich verzette tegen overdaad en luxe. Hij volgde de sociale conventies van zijn tijd door kostbare en modieuze kleding te dragen. De schilderkunst daarentegen moest wat hem betreft een eeuwigheidswaarde hebben, die zou worden aangetast door opzichtige, eigentijdse modes.

Waarom een opdrachtgever akkoord zou gaan met een sobere representatie zonder de in het hofceremonieel vereiste opsmuk, is de prangende vraag die in hoofdstuk 4 centraal staat. Leonardo bezocht het hof van Mantua in de winter van 1499-1500, waar hij een voorbereidend karton maakte voor een portret van hertogin Isabella d'Este, dat uiteindelijk nooit is uitgevoerd. Isabella's vele brieven geven een goed beeld zowel van het belang dat zij aan haar uiterlijke verschijning hechtte als van haar omgang met kunstenaars. Leonardo bleek een uitzonderlijke positie te bekleden. Waar andere schilders strikte instructies ontvingen, behield Leonardo de vrijheid te schilderen wat hij wilde. Kennelijk zou een werk van zijn hand Isabella meer status verschaffen dan kleding en sieraden ooit konden.

In het laatste hoofdstuk worden de verschillende hypotheses die geopperd zijn over de kleding van *Mona Lisa* besproken en weerlegd. Met een reconstructie van de verschillende fases van de totstandkoming van het schilderij op grond van recent technisch onderzoek door het Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France en het National Research Council of Canada, evenals van een eigentijdse werkplaatskopie, nu in Madrid, kon voor het eerst worden aangetoond dat Leonardo Lisa Gherardini aanvankelijk in eigentijdse, Florentijnse kleding portretteerde en pas in een latere fase, hoogstwaarschijnlijk in zijn tweede Milanese periode (1508-1513), een wijd, semitransparant overkleed toevoegde om die eigentijdse mode te verhullen. Dit geeft een heel nieuw inzicht zowel in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van de *Mona Lisa* als in Leonardo's bedoelingen. Voor het overkleed – meer draperie dan realistische kleding – kunnen verschillende voorbeelden worden aangewezen, waaronder Verrocchio's marmeren buste van een dame in de Bargello, de engel in beide versies van Leonardo's altaarstuk *De Maagd op de Rotsen* en Verrocchio's tekening van een geïdealiseerd vrouwenkopje in Oxford.

Uit Leonardo's notities over het vermijden van eigentijdse mode en het weergeven van plooival blijkt dat het een bewuste keuze moet zijn geweest om Lisa's kleding te wijzigen in

soepel vallende draperie. Net als bij Ginevra verwijst Lisa's onopgesmukte kleding naar haar karakter. Leonardo ging bij de *Mona Lisa* echter een stap verder, door bestaande mode te bedekken met een gedrapeerd kledingstuk dat tot dan toe alleen gebruikelijk was voor engelen, nimfen en andere mythologische figuren. Leonardo streefde naar schilderkunst met eeuwigheidswaarde en adviseerde daarom tegen het gebruik van eigentijdse mode, die na verloop van tijd ridicuul zou worden. Een schilderij moest, in Leonardo's eigen woorden, worden bewonderd 'om zijn waardigheid en schoonheid'. De huidige roem van *Mona Lisa* toont hoezeer hij in deze opzet is geslaagd.

De bestudering van Leonardo's vrouwenportretten vanuit een kostuumhistorisch perspectief heeft tot een aantal belangrijke, nieuwe inzichten geleid. Niet alleen konden bepaalde kledingstukken worden geïdentificeerd en dateringen worden bevestigd of verworpen, er is vooral meer inzicht ontstaan in de manier waarop Leonardo kleding inzette als beeldstrategie. In een aantal stappen onderging de kleding van zijn geportretteerden een grote transformatie, beginnend met sobere, maar realistische kleding in de *Ginevra de' Benci*, via aanpassingen aan de textiel in de hofportretten naar een uiteindelijke culminatie in de *Mona Lisa*, waarin eigentijdse kleding is verhuld door elegante, soepele draperie. Het doel daarbij was steeds de schoonheid en de daarmee onlosmakelijk verbonden deugdzaamheid van de geportretteerden optimaal tot hun recht te laten komen. Het was al langer bekend dat Leonardo eerst naar de natuur werkte om vervolgens de menselijke figuur te idealiseren. Naar nu blijkt was kleding een onlosmakelijk onderdeel van dit idealiseringsproces.

Curriculum vitae

Sara van Dijk was born on 30 November 1981 in Amersfoort. In 2000, she completed her secondary education at the Stedelijk Gymnasium Johan van Oldenbarnevelt in her native town. That same year, she started her study Art History at Leiden University, where she graduated in 2006 with a *doctoraalscriptie* (thesis) on women's dress in Florence and Rome in the second half of the fifteenth century. Funding of the GWO fonds and Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) enabled her to pursue her research on the subject of Italian Renaissance women's dress for her PhD thesis during several stays at the Dutch University Institute for Art History (NIKI) in Florence between 2008 and 2014.

After graduation, Sara worked as a freelance art historian for a wide variety of clients, including the Centraal Museum in Utrecht and the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. In 2011, she returned to Leiden University as a lecturer of decorative arts. In 2011-2012 she also worked as a research assistant for the University of Warwick (Coventry, UK) and from February 2014 until January 2015 she was affiliated to the ERC research project 'Elevated Minds. The Sublime in the Public Arts in Seventeenth Century Paris and Amsterdam' based at Leiden University as program coordinator. In February 2015 she was appointed junior curator of textiles in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.