



GIOVANNI BATTISTA LUPICINI
ITALIAN (FLORENTINE SCHOOL), 1575–1648

Muse of Painting

1606–1625

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

Provenance: Maître Riche, Paris; Samuel H. Kress collection;
Columbia Museum of Art since 1954.

The Artist

Recognizable as an example of seventeenth-century Florentine painting, the museum's picture had been attributed to Lorenzo Lippi (1606-1665) and Giovanni Battista Lupicini (1578-1648), and recently re-attributed to a younger member of the Lupicini family, Francesco. Scholars reassessed the attribution due to close stylistic affinities to other works, in particular, the *Martha reproving Mary Magdalene* in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches, which appeared in a seventeenth-century inventory ascribed to the younger Lupicini.¹ At first look, Francesco's paintings appear to be a synthesis of different styles and inspired by the smooth pictorial style of his uncle Cristofano Allori. Until recently, little was known about Francesco's career, which was not helped by his omission from the biographer Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie* that made note of major and minor artists of Seicento Florence. On the other hand, Francesco's brother or cousin, Giovanni Battista, was mentioned in Baldinucci's biographies as a pupil of Ludovico Cigoli. The reconstruction of Francesco's *oeuvre* began with the artist's inclusion in an important exhibition dedicated to seventeenth-century Florentine painting at the Palazzo Strozzi in 1989.²

Following the footsteps of Giovanni Battista, Francesco Lupicini was a member of Florence's Accademia del Disegno. Records indicate Francesco was active in Florence during the mid-1620s to 1630, a period when he received numerous commissions for major works, including *The Fall of Manna*, an altarpiece for the Church of the Carmine in Pistoia. Francesco shares stylistic characteristics with the Florentine painter Cesare Dandini, as well as subject matter, including paintings of allegorical female figures. In 1632, he left for Spain, where he remained active until the end of his life. The painter received numerous commissions in the city of Zaragoza, including an altarpiece for the Chapel of St. Helena in the Cathedral Le Zeo.

The Painting

The half-length figure of a young woman mixing colors on a palette and crowned with laurel is more appropriately named an Allegory of Painting in place of its earlier identification as a muse of painting. Of the nine legendary muses born to Zeus and Mnemosyne, none was associated with the craft of painting. The picture is a subject inspired

by Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. The cool stare and expression of indifference suggest we have interrupted the artist as she prepares colors upon her palette. Her unruly mass of dark hair cascades upon the subtle iridescent colors of her dress, the curls drawing attention to the loose brushwork of carefully modulated green and yellow hues of her robe. Lupicini's young woman features several attributes found in Ripa's personification of *Pittura* (Painting), including the disheveled dark hair that suggests the inspired absorption of artistic temperaments, and the *drappo cangiante*, drapery of changing colors that demonstrates pictorial skill. In Ripa's description of *Pittura*, the woman wore a golden chain with a mask to denote imitation. Emerging from the shadows under the luminescent face is a gold chain covered with opulent jewels, the variety of reflective surfaces a substitute for Ripa's mask, which signifies the important role of imitation to art. Aside from the missing mask, Lupicini made another adjustment to Ripa's formula for the personification of

Painting by replacing the prescribed brush with a palette knife, a tool found in other half-length figures of *Pittura*, including canvases by Cesare Dandini. A diffuse light filters from above and beyond the frame, producing deep shadows that accentuate the model's luminous skin, adding a sense of depth to the picture that suggests actual presence.

An *Allegory of Sculpture*, formerly in the Luigi Koelliker Collection, Milan-London, is likely to be a pendant to the museum's picture.³ The painting shares several pictorial affinities with the Columbia Museum painting, including the laurel crown, the contemporary dress, and the raking light across the minimalist background. Both paintings reflect the interest in the production of half-length female personifications by Florentine painters of the 1620s and 1630s, such as Cesare Dandini's *Allegory of Painting* in Bologna's Galleria Fondantico.⁴

by Sandra Cheng

Exhibitions: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, April 1969–June 1969.

Bibliography:

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Contini-Bonacossi, Alessandro. *Art of the Renaissance from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*. Columbia, 1962, 98, no. 34. (as Lorenzo Lippi)

Ewald, Gerhard. "Studien zur florentiner Barockmalerei," *Pantheon* 13, 5 (1965), 302-318. (fig. 15 as Giovanni Battista Lupicini)

Hibbard, Howard and Joan Nissman. *Florentine Baroque Art from American Collections*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1969. (fig. 6 as Giovanni Battista Lupicini)

Shapley, Fern Rusk. *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. Italian Paintings XVI-XVII*. London: Phaidon, 1973, 85, fig. 151. (fig. 151 as Giovanni Battista Lupicini)

Papi, Gianni. "Francesco Lupicini." In *La Pittura in Italia. Il Seicento*. Milan: Electa, 1989. v. 2, 793-94.

Bellesi, Sandro. *Catalogo dei pittori fiorentini del '600 e '700, Biografie e opera*. Florence: Polistampa, 2009, v. 1, 183-84, and v. 3, 56-58. (fig. 934 as Francesco Lupicini)

Baldassari, Francesca. *La Pittura del Seicento a Firenze. Indice degli artisti e delle loro opere*. Turin: Robilant and Voena, 2009, 470-479. (as Francesco Lupicini)

Baldassari, Francesca. In *Florence au grand siècle entre peinture et littérature*, exh. cat., Elena Fumagalli and Massimiliano Rossi, eds., Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2011, 208-9. (fig. 50.1 as Francesco Lupicini)

Baldassari, Francesca, ed. *Seicento Fiorentino. Sacred and Profane Allegories*. Florence: Centro Di della Edifimi, 2012. (fig. 1 as Francesco Lupicini)

Notes:

1. Papi, "Francesco Lupicini," 793.
2. Gianni Papi authored a brief entry for Francesco Lupicini in the massive three-volume exhibition catalogue, "Francesco Lupicini," 793-794.
3. The painting is now with the art dealer Otto Naumann in New York. On the painting, see Baldassari 2012, 28-33. The Koelliker Collection also has a workshop copy of the Columbia Museum's *Allegory of Painting* with slightly larger dimensions (64 x 49 cm), Baldassari 2009, 470.
4. Elena Fumagalli et Massimiliano Rossi, eds., *Florence au grand siècle entre peintre et Littérature*, exh. cat. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2011, cat. no. 49. Francesca Baldassari, 2011, 206-207, n. 49.