

## Drawings after the 'Atlas' Statuette by Jacopo Tintoretto and His Workshop

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Among the graphic production by Jacopo Tintoretto and his workshop, a significant number of extant drawings attest to the artist's practice of drawing after sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Obviously Tintoretto possessed several statuettes, made of bronze, wax, plaster or clay, which were mostly after Michelangelo's prototypes but also included a few copies of antique pieces. This practice seems to have started early in the artist's career, most probably in the 1540s, as a means of exploring a variety of formal studies, and the results constitute a fascinating synthesis of the sophisticated Mannerist figural style and the typically Venetian atmospheric drawing technique. Tintoretto may well have continued to adapt this method, especially for educational purposes within his workshop, until the very late period. Among this group of drawings, at least fifteen sheets were drawn after a statuette of Atlas from various angles and they are mostly assigned to his workshop (fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> In the present short note I will discuss the question of the model of these drawings.

The 'Atlas' statuette depicted by Tintoretto was once thought to reflect a lost model by Michelangelo, but in 1960 Michail Liebman first pointed out that a statuette attributed to the workshop of Jacopo Sansovino now in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (fig. 2) should be regarded as Tintoretto's model.<sup>3</sup> Then Hans Weirauch reconsidered the question and assigned the Moscow statuette to Sansovino himself.<sup>4</sup> Later historians accepted the idea that Tintoretto's 'Atlas' drawings were after Sansovino's model, best represented by the Moscow statuette, and Fenyö, Bjurström, Rearick, Goldner and Hendrix have repeated the same idea.<sup>5</sup> However, as was noted by Liebmann himself, the drawn figures and the Moscow statuette show marked differences in certain details, most notably in the angle of the head and that of right hand.<sup>6</sup> To explain these differences Liebmann tentatively suggested the possibility that Tintoretto may have obtained a wax statuette and modified some of the details to attain more expressive effects.

Now I would like to point out that a statuette of Atlas exactly corresponding formally to the drawings by Tintoretto and his workshop exists in the Metalwork Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (figs. 3-5). It is a gilt bronze, apparently a variation based on the Moscow statuette, and it shows the head and the right wrist perfectly matching Tintoretto's depictions.<sup>7</sup> While originally the figure should have held a stick like the Moscow statuette, as the hole in the right hand shows, the celestial sphere and the round base are likely to be later additions. Although the extended left forefinger cannot be discerned in the drawings, it is reasonable to consider that this London statuette records the appearance of the very model possessed by Tintoretto. The earliest clear adaptation of the 'Atlas' figure in Tintoretto's paintings is generally thought to be found in the large canvas *St. Roch Ministering to the Plague-Stricken* (Venice, Chiesa di S. Rocco) dated 1549.<sup>8</sup> However, it should be noted that another adaptation, the figure of a running youth in the left foreground of the *Transportation of the Body of St. Mark* (Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts) (fig. 6),<sup>9</sup> may be even earlier, since the painting may date to the mid-1540s, as is proposed on a stylistic basis by Echols and Ilchman.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the approximate date of the London figure would be around 1545, and its author is likely to be a follower of Sansovino in Venice.

Another point I would like to raise here regards one drawing formerly in the Koenigs Collection



fig. 1 Tintoretto workshop, Two Studies after the 'Atlas' Statuette, black and white chalk on blue paper, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. no. 1969 recto



fig. 2 Jacopo Sansovino, *Atlas*, bronze statuette, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, inv. no. 2b-31



figs. 3-5 Follower of Jacopo Sansovino, *Atlas*, gilt bronze statuette, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 2291a-1855



fig. 6 Jacopo Tintoretto, *Transportation of the Body of St. Mark* (detail), ca. 1545-46, Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts

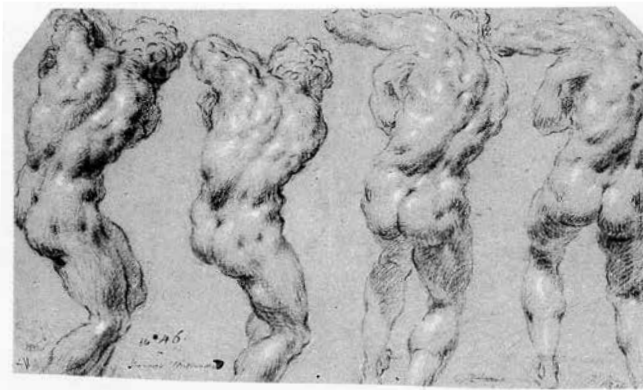


fig. 7 Tintoretto workshop, *Four Studies after the 'Telamon (?)' Statuette*, black and white chalk on blue paper, formerly Franz Koenigs Collection (now in Moscow), inv. no. I.223 recto

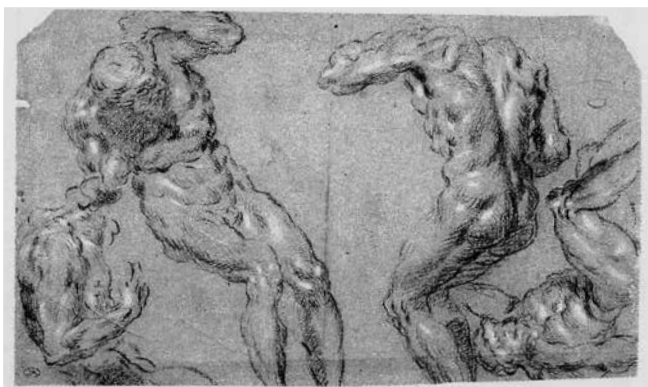


fig. 8 Tintoretto workshop, *Four Studies after the 'Atlas' Statuette*, black and white chalk on blue paper, formerly Franz Koenigs Collection (now in Moscow), inv. no. I.223 verso



fig. 9 After Bartolomeo Ammannati (?), *Male Figure* [here given the provisory title 'Telamon (?)'], bronze statuette, Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig



fig. 10 Another view of the same statuette as in fig. 9



fig. 11 Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail), ca. 1546-47, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (UK)



fig. 12 Jacopo Tintoretto (?), *Study after the 'Telamon (?)' Statuette*, black and white chalk on blue paper, private collection

and now known to be kept in Moscow (Koenigs inv. no. I.223) (figs. 7-8). This sheet was listed by Tietze and Tietze-Conrat as no. 1665 and was given the titles “Four studies from the so-called Atlas” (*recto*) and “Four other studies from the same figure” (*verso*).<sup>11</sup> Liebmann has shown that their statement was obviously wrong. In fact the four figures on the *verso* are familiar ones and indeed after the Atlas statuette in London, but the other four on the *recto* depict another statuette, showing completely different arm positioning.<sup>12</sup> Albert Elen rightly observed the difference between the two models, but seems to be confused, as he called the *recto* figures “Four studies after a bronze *bozzetto* of Atlas, ca. 1540-50” (i.e., the Atlas statuette known in other similar studies by Tintoretto) and the *verso* figures “Four similar studies, but of another statuette of Atlas”.<sup>13</sup> To be precise, the statuette drawn on the *recto* of the Koenigs I.223 appears only on this sheet among the known drawing œuvre of Tintoretto. For the purpose of convenience to distinguish the two different models, I would give a provisory title ‘Telamon (?)’ to this latter statuette.

The model of the figures on the Koenigs I.223 *recto* was also identified by Liebmann. It is a wax statuette (present whereabouts unknown) reproduced by Brinckmann in *Barok-Bozzetti* (1924),<sup>14</sup> and its variant is now in the Herzog Anton-Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig (figs. 9-10).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the *recto* and *verso* of the Koenigs sheet firmly testify that Tintoretto possessed two similar but distinct statuettes, ‘Atlas’ and ‘Telamon (?)’, and yet, still some uncertainty seems to prevail even among drawing specialists. For example, the related catalogue entry for the I.223 sheet in the 1995 Moscow exhibition of the Koenigs Collection drawings simply overlooked the differentiation of the two models.<sup>16</sup>

When did Tintoretto acquire the ‘Telamon (?)’ statuette? I believe that an early adaptation can be found in the figure on the right of Tintoretto’s canvas, now in Cambridge’s Fitzwilliam Museum, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 11).<sup>17</sup> The Cambridge painting is dated to 1546-47 by Paola Rossi — and to the late 1540s by Echols and Ilchman—,<sup>18</sup> so it seems plausible that the painter came to know the statuette around 1545. Contextually, it is rather significant that Weirauch suggests Bartolomeo Ammannati as the possible author of this statuette.<sup>19</sup> In 1544-47 Ammannati worked in Padua and in Venice for various commissions, sometimes in collaboration with Sansovino. Among others, he realized the triumphal arch for the Palazzo Benavides and the Tomb of the Benavides family in the Chiesa degli Eremitani for Marco Mantova Benavides.<sup>20</sup> In the same period, the young Tintoretto must have had some contact with this erudite patron, as he had been introduced to this Paduan scholar and famous collector of antique works by the Venetian patrician Girolamo Querini in 1541.<sup>21</sup> Taking all these circumstances into account, I am much inclined to suppose that the occasion for Tintoretto to acquire these statuettes as well as the copies of Michelangelo’s New Sacristy statues may have occurred in the mid-1540s through contact with the circle of Marco Mantova Benavides, which included Sansovino, Ammannati, Aretino and Anton Francesco Doni.

In 1991 Roger Rearick published an extremely interesting sheet showing the same ‘Telamon (?)’ statuette, attributing it to the young Tintoretto (fig. 12).<sup>22</sup> Stylistically this drawing looks rather unlike the known group of Tintoretto’s drawings after sculpture. The modeling is much softer, and the extensive use of white heightening makes the figure look like a living creature rather than a sculpted object. Rearick maintained that the sheet represented the early phase of the artist’s drawing style, still retaining the strong influence of Titian’s sensuous drawing style. I have to leave the attributive question of this fascinating drawing open, but I would admit that the above-described contexts around 1545 may add certain credibility to Rearick’s intuitive attribution.

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## Notes

- 1 For the synthetic discussion of Tintoretto's practice to draw after sculpture, see Whitaker 1997.
- 2 Tietze and Tietze-Conrat (1944) listed 13 drawings after 'Atlas' statuette:
  - No. 1569 (Budapest, inv. no. 1970), see Fenyő 1965, no. 27 and Zantai 2003, no. 52.
  - No. 1570 (Budapest, inv. no. 1969), see Fenyő 1965, no. 28 and Zantai 2003, no. 51.
  - No. 1647 (Florence, Uffizi, inv. no. 7484 S), see Rossi 1975, pp. 38-39.
  - No. 1665 (formerly Koenigs Coll., inv. no. I.223), see Elen 1989, no. 392 and Moscow 1995, no. 134.
  - No. 1669 (formerly Koenigs Coll., inv. no. I.343), see Elen 1989, no. 390 and Moscow 1995, no. 125.
  - No. 1671 (formerly Koenigs Coll., inv. no. I.396), no recent literature.
  - No. 1746 (Rome, Ist. Naz. Grafica, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, inv. no. F.C. 125529), see Ruggeri 1989, no. 8.
  - No. 1807 (Florence, Uffizi, inv. no. 13008 F), reproduced Von Hadeln 1922, pl. 10.
  - No. 1812 (Florence, Uffizi, inv. no. 13046 F), no recent literature.
  - No. 1818 (Florence, Uffizi, inv. no. 7512 S), reproduced Von Hadeln 1922, pl. 11.
  - No. 1843 (London, V & A, inv. no. Dyce 244), see Ward-Jackson 1979, no. 336.
  - No. 1857 (Rome, Ist. Naz. Grafica, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, inv. no. F.N. 138), see Ruggeri 1989, no. 15.
  - No. 1858 (Rome, Ist. Naz. Grafica, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, inv. no. F.N. 137), see Ruggeri 1989, no. 14.
 Then, two other drawings unknown to the Tietzes are to be added:
  - Stockholm, Nationamuseum, inv. no. NM 150/1963, see Bjurström 1974, no. 25.
  - Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 89.GB.72, see Goldner and Hendrix 1992, no. 47.
 A pen drawing published by Hugelshofer in 1962 as Tintoretto seems to be by an artist associated with the Tintoretto workshop in the late period, probably Palma il Giovane. See Hugelshofer 1962, p. 341, fig.3 (private collection).
- 3 Liebmann 1987.
- 4 Weirauch 1965, pp. 266-267.
- 5 Fenyő 1965, Bjurström 1974, Rearick 2001, p. 161, Goldner and Hendrix 1992.
- 6 Liebman 1987, p. 208.
- 7 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Metalwork Collection, inv. no. 2291a-1855, gilt bronze, from Bernal Collection. I am deeply grateful to Mr. Anthony North for providing me with good photographs of this piece.
- 8 Pallucchini and Rossi 1982, no. 134.
- 9 *Ibid.*, no. 126.
- 10 Echols and Ilchman 2009, p. 121, Checklist no. 33.
- 11 Tietze, p. 285, no. 1665.
- 12 Liebmann 1987, p. pp. 210-211.
- 13 Elen 1989, p. 200, no. 392.
- 14 Brinckmann 1924, pls. 8-9 (as "School of Michelangelo").
- 15 Weirauch 1965, p. 271. The statuette forms a pair with another piece which is an obvious variant of the London 'Atlas'. Weirauch suggests that the Braunschweig pair might have derived, around 1600, from the pair possessed by Tintoretto.
- 16 Moscow 1995, p. 190, no. 134.
- 17 Pallucchini and Rossi 1982, no. 121.

- 18 Echols and Ilchman 2009, p.122, Checklist no. 43.  
19 Weirauch 1965, p. 270.  
20 See Lattanzi 1995.  
21 Krischel 1996, p. 150, Anhang 1. In the same article, Krischel discussed the young Tintoretto's reference to the Benavides Tomb and Ammannati's replica from Michelangelo's *Aurora*. See, *ibid.*, pp. 139-144.  
22 Rearick 1991, pp. 29-30. The drawing was previously published by Oberhuber as "Venetian artist close to Titian". See Oberhuber 1976, p. 142, no. 90.

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