Review of Bernini: Sculpting in Clay.

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C. D. Dickerson III, Anthony Sigel, and Ian Wardropper, eds. *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay*.

Exh. Cat. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum; distributed by Yale University Press, 2012. xvi + 416 pp. \$65. ISBN: 978-1-58839-472-9.

All sculptors, Vasari tells us, used clay models, but none used them with such fervor as Bernini. Sandrart, visiting Bernini's studio in the mid-1630s, saw twenty-two models just for the *Longinus*, and Lelio Guidiccioni, visiting in 1632, saw the master at work on a model of the bust of Scipione Borghese, his fingers moving with the deftness of a musician playing the harp. For Bernini, modeling in clay was a way of imparting what Irving Lavin long ago called "calculated spontaneity" to marble. In Bernini's well-organized studio, the small sketch would be followed by a more finished mid-sized model, then in some cases by the full-scale model meant to guide the hired chisels that actually carved the army of statues. Somewhere in the neighborhood of forty clay models by Bernini survive, more than for all the sculptors of the Renaissance put together.

This beautiful book accompanied the exhibition of Bernini *bozzetti* held at the Metropolitan Museum and the Kimball Art Museum in late 2012 and early 2013. There are six substantial essays by the curators and invited Bernini experts, catalogue entries for the fifty-two *bozzetti* in the show, and a checklist of drawings. At the heart of the book is an extremely useful “visual glossary” that reflects the decade-long, multi-country research of Fogg conservator Anthony Sigel, who has revolutionized the study of *bozzetti*. He can tell how clay is rolled, sawed, pinched, pointed, hollowed out, buttressed, and repaired. He has isolated the signature modeling techniques Bernini used to push the wet clay around limbs and necks. He can tell whether a *bozzetto* was worked up in a few hours or kept malleable for days or weeks under wet cloths. He can spot the sculptor’s fingernails and with the help of criminal dactylography has isolated what are most likely his fingerprints. And he documents all of this with amazing microphotographs.

C. D. Dickerson, who wrote a 2006 thesis on *bozzetti* in early Seicento Rome, explores how they might have entered Bernini’s practice: from the use of death masks for posthumous portraits; from the Florentine workshop tradition, mediated by his father Pietro; and especially from Bernini’s association with an older sculptor, Stefano Maderno, who carved just one marble masterpiece in his life but did a series of brilliant clay sketches that helped his younger colleague see how wet clay could embody the fire of art. Ian Wardropper discusses the way Bernini’s drawings use wash and pen with the same spontaneity as the *bozzetti*. Bernini himself said in Paris that the drawings of great men were more satisfying than their finished works, and predictably, collectors began to covet the drawings around the same time as the *bozzetti*. Under the Chigi pope, Alexander VII, the personality cult around Bernini swelled to Picasso-like proportions, and Queen Christina of Sweden thought it an honor to visit the sculptor’s studio and touch his rough leather apron. Tomaso Montanari charts how Bernini *bozzetti* began to enter collections at this time. Indeed, many of those preserved are for late works like the Tomb of Alexander VII, the Cathedra Petri, the angels of the Ponte Sant’Angelo, and those of the Chapel of the Sacrament in St. Peter’s. The two stars of the show, however, were made for the previous pope, Innocent X: the lion for the *Four Rivers* fountain and the *Moro* (really a sea creature) for the fountain in front of the Pamphilj palace. Bernini’s lover Costanza formed a collection that eventually wound up with the Chigi, as Sarah McPhee has shown in her fascinating book on this alluring woman. With surprising nonchalance Bernini’s heirs left their stash of *bozzetti* to crumble in the attic of the house on via della Mercede, and for years a servant made money by selling them off on the sly. They passed through the famous eighteenth-century Roman collections to their modern homes: the Brandegee estate in Brookline, Massachusetts, and from there to the Fogg Museum; the Farsetti collection, and from there to Catherine the Great and the Hermitage; and the Franchetti collection in the Ca d’Oro in Venice. Steven Ostrow rounds out the book with an informative essay on a century of interpretation, but it seems clear that never again will so many Bernini *bozzetti* be

assembled in one place, and that the high-water mark in their study will long be the present book.

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