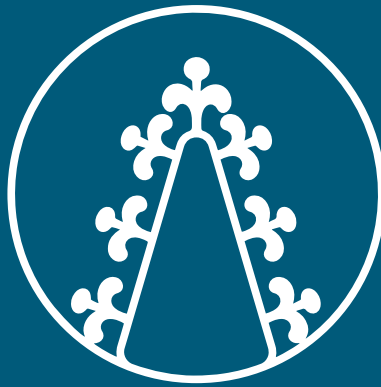


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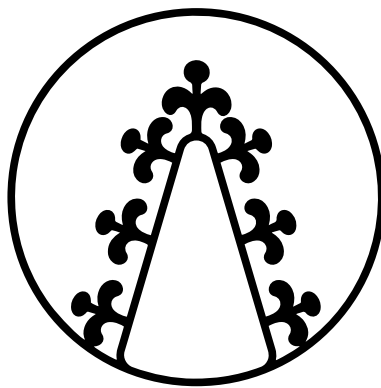
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## ABSTRACT

Alessandro Allori's *Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno* have been well known since Roberto Ciardi's article on *dilettanti* draughtsmen (1971) and Paola Barocchi's transcription in *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento* (1973). These two authors shaped all subsequent opinions on Allori's unfinished treatise. However, Ciardi's proposed order for the five surviving manuscripts is debatable, and Barocchi only transcribed the last and most clearly written version of Allori. My essay investigates the creation of all manuscripts and highlights the main theoretical and didactic changes apparent within the five versions. In doing so, I draw parallels with the intellectual history of the Medicean Accademia Fiorentina and Accademia del Disegno, and with the debates taking place within the literary and artistic circles of the time. Finally, I suggest a new sequence and date for the manuscripts, supposing that Allori worked on his treatise from at least 1565 until the late 1570s.

*I Ragionamenti delle regole del disegno di Alessandro Allori sono noti fin dall'articolo di Roberto Ciardi sui disegnatori dilettanti (1971) e dalla trascrizione che ne fece Paola Barocchi negli Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento (1973). Questi due studiosi hanno dato forma a tutte le opinioni successive sul trattato incompiuto di Allori. Ciardi provò a ordinare i cinque manoscritti superstiti, ma in maniera discutibile, mentre Barocchi ne trascrisse soltanto l'ultima e più accurata versione. Il mio saggio analizza la genesi dei cinque manoscritti, mettendo in evidenza i principali cambiamenti teorici e didattici che si manifestano al loro interno. Li metto poi in relazione con i dibattiti intellettuali in seno all'Accademia Fiorentina, all'Accademia del Disegno e in generale agli ambienti letterari e artistici della Firenze del tempo. Propongo infine un nuovo ordine e una nuova datazione per ciascun manoscritto, ipotizzando che Allori lavorò al suo trattato almeno dal 1565 fino alla fine degli anni Settanta.*

**KEYWORDS** Alessandro Allori • Agnolo Bronzino • Ragionamenti delle regole del disegno • Jacopo Pontormo • Renaissance • drawing • treatise • Accademia del Disegno • Accademia Fiorentina • Florence • Italy

**PAROLE CHIAVE** Alessandro Allori • Agnolo Bronzino • Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno • Jacopo Pontormo • Rinascimento • disegno • trattato • Accademia del Disegno • Accademia Fiorentina • Firenze • Italia

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## PEER-REVIEW

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# Alessandro Allori's *Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno*: A New Perspective on the Formation of the First Drawing Manual

✦ Nino Nanobashvili

Gutenberg-Museum, Mainz



One's origin as well as one's education were key factors in early modern Florence for recognition at the Medici court and in the artistic circles of the Accademia del Disegno. However, despite the Florentine origins of Alessandro Allori and the fact that he was a pupil of Agnolo Bronzino, he had to further assert himself as an artist several times throughout his career. I will here explain the extent to which Allori's work on his didactic book, *Ragionamenti delle Regole del Disegno*, should be understood in this genealogical context. Allori's text is mostly cited in art historical research in relation to the life or artistic training of Agnolo Bronzino, and most references to it focus on the version transcribed by Paola Barocchi in *Scritti d'Arte del Cinquecento*<sup>1</sup>. This edition was based on the last and most clean handwritten version of the five surviving manuscripts. As a result, this text became broadly accessible to scholars. At the same time, this led to exclusive focus on this one published version to the detriment of the others, even though these were amply referenced by Barocchi in her extensive footnotes<sup>2</sup>.

This essay analyzes the context of creation of all five manuscripts and highlights the main theoretical and didactic changes apparent within them. I will draw parallels with intellectual events at the Accademia Fiorentina and at the Accademia del Disegno and within the literary and artistic circles of the time. In doing so, I will shed new light on all versions of the *Ragionamenti*

*delle Regole del Disegno* and demonstrate Allori's important role within these Medicean institutions<sup>3</sup>.

Allori began writing the *Ragionamenti* five times, and each time he revised the content as well as the didactic orientation of his text. Fortunately, all the sheets relative to these different versions were arranged and bound by a connoisseur of Allori's manuscripts sometime after the author's death<sup>4</sup>. In this essay, I have numbered the manuscripts with letters from A to E and analyzed them in sequence to illustrate their relationship to each other, their chronology, and the changes that took place from one version to the next<sup>5</sup>. I will show that Allori worked on the text over a longer period of time than previously thought, writing the earliest version (A<sup>1</sup>) for the intellectual Accademia Fiorentina in 1565 and revising the last (transcribed) version (E) in the late 1570s.

## Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> (1565) and the Allori's Admission to the Accademia Fiorentina

The text of the earliest version, here referred to as Manuscript A<sup>1</sup>, is a conversation between Alessandro Allori and five Florentine noblemen, Andrea Minerbetti, Tomaso del Nero, Simone Tornabuoni, Cosimo Rucellai, and Vincenzio Acciaiuoli<sup>6</sup>, who exchange views with the artist on cultural events in Florence and on the importance of *disegno*. The first half of Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> deals exclusively with theoretical questions about *disegno*<sup>7</sup>. Central to this is the characterization of the concept of drawing

<sup>1</sup> For all subsequent research, the annotated transcription by Paola Barocchi (ALLORI/BAROCCHI 1973, pp. 1941-1981) has been fundamental.

<sup>2</sup> Basic research on the *Ragionamenti*: FURNO 1902, pp. 35-36, 112; HEIKAMP 1956, pp. 34-53; CIARDI 1971, pp. 267-284; KEMP 1974, pp. 121-131; DICKEL 1987, pp. 76-77; LECCHINI GIOVANNONI 1991, pp. 309-310; KORNELL 1992; REILLY 1999; BARR 2006, pp. 53-107; NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 20-80. CIARDI (1971) argued that the later versions (Manuscripts C to E, cf. infra note 5) must have been written around 1560 because of their use of a didactic structure associated with the emerging lay culture. FURNO (1902) and REILLY (1999) are examples of the few authors who thoroughly dealt with all five manuscripts and proposed a later classification accordingly.

<sup>3</sup> As I argued in NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 6-80.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. infra the last chapter of this essay.

<sup>5</sup> In order to keep track of the five surviving versions, the manuscripts are indicated with letters from A to E in the order in which Allori created them. They are kept in the BNCF, Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415: Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> (fols. [66r]-[79v]; 42x28.5 cm), dialogue between Allori and five *nobili* (Andrea di Ruggeri Minerbetti, Tomaso d'Agostino del Nero, Simone di Donato Tornabuoni, Cosimo di Palla Rucelli, and Vincentio di Carlo Acciaiuoli); Manuscript A<sup>2</sup> (fols. [74r]-[79v]; 42x28.5 cm), continuation of A<sup>1</sup>, created as a result of the revision of A<sup>1</sup>; Manuscript B (fols. [33r]-[55v]; 43.5x29 cm), dialogue between Allori and five *nobili* (as in A<sup>1</sup>), revision and summary of A<sup>1+2</sup>; Manuscript C (fols. [80r]-[92v]; 45x33 cm), dialogue between Allori and Bronzino; Manuscript D<sup>1</sup> (fols. [56r]-[65v]; 45x33 cm) the dialogue between Allori and Bronzino, revision of C; Manuscript D<sup>2</sup> (fols. [21r]-[32v]; 45x33 cm), continuation of D<sup>1</sup>; Manuscript E (fols. [1r]-[20v]; 44x33 cm), dialogue between Allori and Bronzino, revision of D<sup>1+2</sup>, fair copy. The manuscripts are not arranged in the order in which they were written, but alternately by format: E (large), D<sup>2</sup> (large), B (small), D<sup>1</sup> (large), A<sup>1+2</sup> (small), C (large); the size of the parchment binding is 47.5x36x3.5 cm.

<sup>6</sup> For the life dates and origins of the five noblemen mentioned by Allori, see CIARDI 1971, p. 277, and REILLY 1999, pp. 37-39.

<sup>7</sup> REILLY (*ibid.*, pp. 36-44) points out that the dialogue is constructed in the Ciceronian style.

as a line and as the foundation of painting<sup>8</sup>. Over the course of three pages is a discussion of how a line forms a relief with light and shadow, thereby becoming painting<sup>9</sup>.

On this point, Allori adds that he is conveying the opinion of his master Agnolo Bronzino<sup>10</sup>, who had made a comparable characterization of the relationship between a drawn line and painting in his reply to Benedetto Varchi's debate on the «paragone delle arti» of 1547<sup>11</sup>. Almost 20 years after Varchi's survey, in 1564 Vincenzo Borghini reopened the discussion about the *paragone*, which led to heated debates among the members of the Accademia del Disegno on the relationship among the arts<sup>12</sup>. Alongside this, in 1565, Bronzino began to work on his fresco *The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* in the San Lorenzo Basilica, where he displayed his position on the *paragone* question in pictorial form, emphasizing the primacy of painting<sup>13</sup>. In his *Ragionamenti* Allori took up Bronzino's unfinished statement to Varchi and defended the opinion of his teacher<sup>14</sup>. In this way, he underlined his closeness to Bronzino and his position on *disegno* in the renewed *paragone* controversy.

In addition to the theoretical issues that are at the center of the dialogue between Allori and the five nobles, the locations mentioned in the *Ragionamenti* are also remarkable. The conversation begins in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in front of Masaccio's frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel. Already in the first edition of the *Lives* (1550), Giorgio Vasari presented Masaccio as the father of the «seconda maniera» and his chapel was the location of many behind-the-scenes meetings among academicians and artists, who emphasized the importance of their Florentine origins<sup>15</sup>. Another section of the dialogue takes place in an equally significant location, namely the garden of the Rucellai family. Since the second half of the fifteenth century,

the *Orto Rucellai* had been associated with the meetings of the Accademia Platonica. In the 1520s, it was associated with the learned circle of Palla Rucellai and Niccolò Machiavelli<sup>16</sup>. Through the evocation of these two sites, Allori situated his theory of *disegno* in the artistic and intellectual context of Renaissance Florence. The mention of Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel at Santa Maria del Carmine in his manuscript, which the artist says were cleaned «in this year», also helps to date the dialogue. Since the restoration of the frescoes was carried out in 1565, the dialogue could not have taken place any sooner<sup>17</sup>.

The second part of version A, Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, which includes drawing lessons, was added only in the course of the first revision (Fig. 1). Along with his corrections, Allori added a passage in the margins announcing his new intention: to continue the dialogue with a lesson on «anatomia» and «disegno»<sup>18</sup>. The «letioni» were to begin with six basic steps—namely, drawing the eye, nose, mouth, ear, profile, and the entire head. After that, the body should be studied in three stages<sup>19</sup>: bones («ossa»), muscles («muscoli», also called «anatomia») and skin («pelle»). The aforementioned lessons on the individual parts of the face are followed by a description of the anatomical parts, including a detailed description of the skull that references Vesalius, as I argue below. How Allori would continue Manuscript A<sup>2</sup> is unknown, as the artist interrupted it at this point.

In the same year in which the dialogue of Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> took place—that is, 1565—Alessandro Allori was appointed a member of the most important literary academy in Florence, linked to the Studio Fiorentino<sup>20</sup>. Since Manuscript B can be dated in the following year, Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> (with or without the second didactic part, Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>) can be considered a possible application text for Allori's admission to the Accademia Fiorentina<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> *Disegno* is discussed here only in relation to painting (Manuscript A<sup>1</sup>, fol. [69r] and especially fols. [69v] and [71v]). Drawing as a simple outline was understood before Allori by Leon Battista Alberti's in the *De Pictura* (ALBERTI/BERTOLINI 2011) with reference to Apelles as adopted by Francesco Bocchi in the *Discorso sopra l'Eccellenza dell'Opere d'Andrea del Sarto, Pittore Fiorentino* (BUF, Ms 9.1, c. 1567). For more, see FAIETTI 2015, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript A<sup>1</sup>, fols. [69r]-[70r]. This detailed characterization of *disegno* is also adopted in Manuscript B, fols. [37r]-[38r], and is shortened to one concise sentence only in Manuscripts C to E. See REILLY 1999, pp. 67-70.

<sup>10</sup> «Alexandro: non voglio disputar cotesto, ma ben vi dico che quant'io mi ricordo haver sentito qual che volta parlar al mio Maestro [Agnolo Bronzino], che egli e messer Vincentio [Acciaiuoli] mi ponete, che sieno d'una medesima oppenione circa alla disputa che fareste sopra alla deffinition del nome del disegno» (Manuscript B, fol. [38r]). The content of the passage was hardly modified in Manuscript A<sup>1</sup>, fol. [70r].

<sup>11</sup> Bronzino puts forward the argument in favor of painting that only the line represents the true art, since it is precisely painting and less so sculpture that contains the line. The text is unfinished and is interrupted at this point. Bronzino's statement is to be understood in relation to the position of Pontormo who also praises the line and recognizes Michelangelo's drawings and paintings as the highest form of art. For Bronzino's response, see VARCHI 1549, pp. 127-131, and REILLY 1999, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Vincenzo Borghini's position in *Selva di Notizie* (BORGHINI/BAROCCHI 1970), and on the dispute among the artists at the Accademia del Disegno, see BARR 2006, pp. 33-35.

<sup>13</sup> For more on everything from the commission to the discussions after the unveiling of the mural, see BARR 2006, pp. 12-21.

<sup>14</sup> On Bronzino's unfinished statement, see BARR 2006, p. 33, note 72, and VARCHI/BÄTSCHMANN-WEDDIGEN 2013, pp. 37-39.

<sup>15</sup> The informal academies, such as the *Compagnia della Cazzuola* and the *Compagnia del Paiuolo*, met in the Brancacci Chapel. There took place the competition of Perino del Vaga and the dispute between Torrigiani and Michelangelo (according to Cellini). For more contextualization and description of these events in the Brancacci Chapel, see JONIEZ 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Palla Rucellai was the father of Cosimo Rucellai, who is part of Allori's dialogue in Manuscripts A<sup>1</sup> and B. See REILLY 1999, pp. 42-43, and BARR 2006, pp. 54-55.

<sup>17</sup> «[I] frati per mezzo delle carità d'altri l'[h]anno tutta lavata che molto meglio si vede che non faceva di prima» (Manuscript A<sup>1</sup>, fol. [66v]). The cleaning of Masaccio's frescoes had taken place in 1565. For more on this, see CIARDI 1971, p. 276; REILLY 1999, p. 40; JONIEZ 2011, p. 783. In addition, Allori speaks of the Carnival that had taken place three years earlier: «fu, se ben mi ricordo, per un Carnovale non è ancora tre anni finiti, cioè l'anno della nostra salute MDLXII» (Manuscript B, fol. [39r]). In Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> (fol. 71r) is a shorter entry without a date: «fu, se ben mi ricorda per un Carnovale [as an addition above the line] non è ancora tre anni finiti». Besides these dates, it is difficult to date Allori's writing, as the year changed in Florence not on January 1, but on March 25. The Carnival on February 1562 thus took place already in February 1563. Furthermore, neither REILLY (1999, p. 40) nor LECCHINI GIOVANNONI (1991, p. 309) give correct page references for Manuscript B, and the comparison with Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> is also missing.

<sup>18</sup> See Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, fols. [74r]-[79v].

<sup>19</sup> «[La testa] la divideremo in sei letioni, la prima da l'occhio, la seconda il naso, la terza la bocca, la quarta l'orechio, la quinta tutto il profilo dal cominciamento de capegli fino al mento, la sesta sarà tutto il capo con la gola appiccato insieme con il suo orechio, dimostrandovi come vedete [?] l'osso sotto, semplicemente di poi i muscoli che sono sotto la pelle, i quali volgarmente son chiamati i primi muscoli, solo ne è levato il grasso e la tela carnosa; e questo è fatto acciò veggiate le cagioni che fanno la superficie della pelle della forma che si vede» (Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, fol. [72v]). The last three steps are also described on the next pages in the reverse order from the inside to the outside, from the bones to the surface.

<sup>20</sup> See PLAISANCE 2004.

<sup>21</sup> In the entries of the diaries of the Accademia Fiorentina (BMF, AAF, B.III.54, fols. 14v and 15r), Allori is mentioned for the first time on September 26, 1565, as taking part in a meeting. In addition, he took part in a vote on February 15, 1565, (in this enumeration, the Florentine turn of the new year on March 25 must be taken into account).



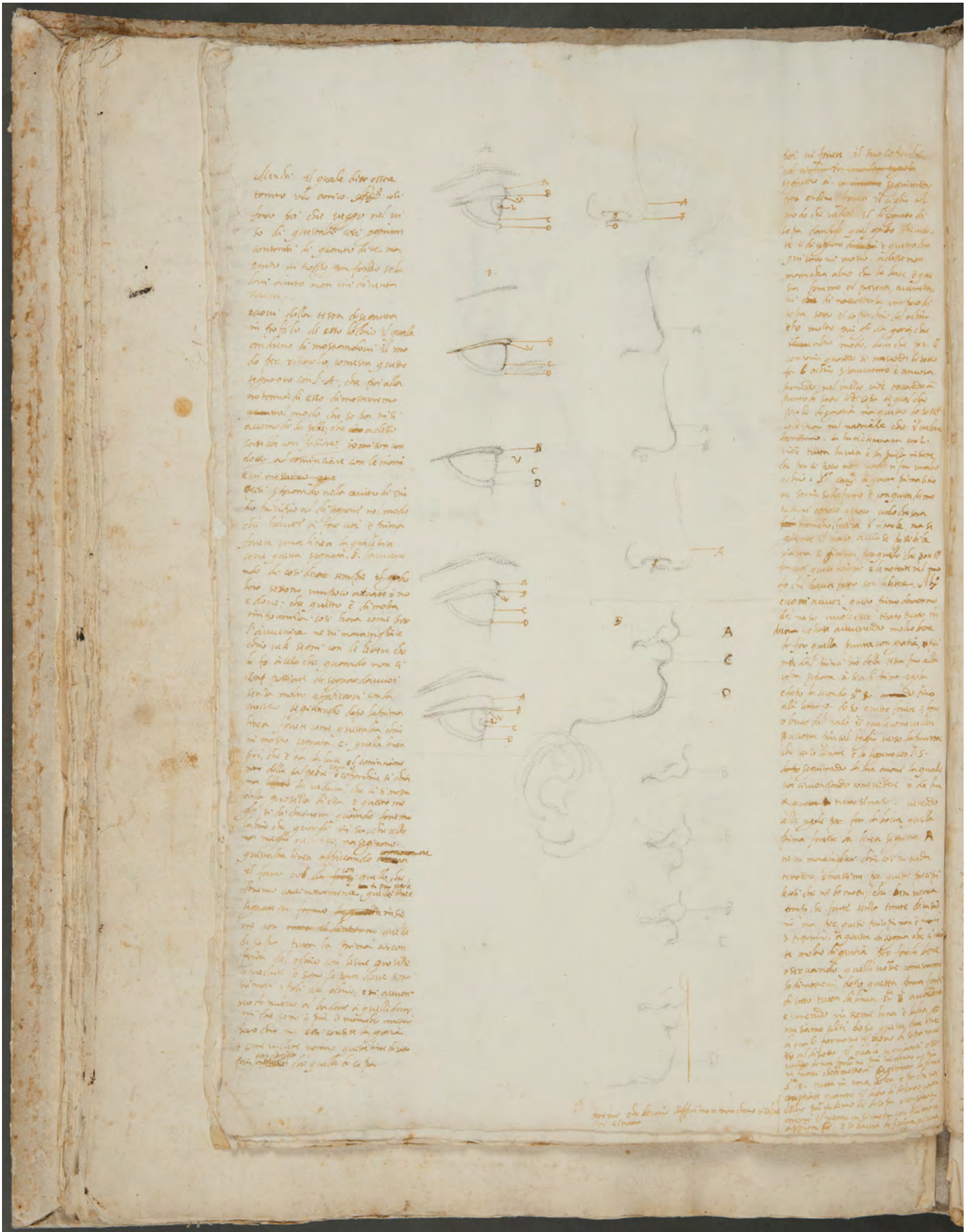


Fig. 1 Alessandro Allori, Untitled, Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, c. 1565, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 74v. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale



## RAGIONAMENTI DELLE REGOLE.

le dichiaratione et il modo per uisarla è prima d'ordine biam  
to del occhio il quale come uede è in profilo amaro egli come il  
designato nella figura prima, e per uisarlo adunque per migliore  
intelligenza si farà in quattro volte, e si seguiranno per uisarla  
qual linea d'ordine, che dice il uisatore, anzi sembra l'ordine  
di dentro non a' nascoste, confusione, e così come si uede  
la prima parte si seguirà con la linea del uisatore la seconda è  
fora et insomma giunte saranno le due parti, et sarà  
il uisatore et prima si seguirà il uisatore, et con questo fatto a  
cui osservate, l'ordine nel uisare.

la sua d'ordine, che prima di ogni altra cosa si  
hanno a uisare son quelli, che formano il capo  
del occhio di sopra, e si uisano, che del contrario l'ordine  
l'ordine al garbo loro considerando que hanno da essere più o  
meno uisati è in ordine come si uisano alquanto sopra la sua  
dell'occhio è uisato calando al basso è un qualche uisato sempre  
la sua in quantità o del più o del meno è tutto con grandissima  
difficoltà è non in uisato di uisare fore così presto anzi andate  
trattano facendo opposto a' loro la pratica è la scienza in uisare

come noi haue fatto il copacchio di sopra ad'occhio  
in ordine malto in girando in dose uisate  
si haue uisato nel primo l'oculare, nel secondo è di poi con  
giungere al detto copacchio la linea che fra di mezzo del occhio seguirà con la linea  
che chi mostra il profilo dell'occhio in ordine con la linea con chiamar  
comunemente, considerando, che il detto d'ordine è in uisato in ordine  
e più presto prende al quanto in dentro, et ancora auuente, di fore  
che la linea si uisano al quanto dalla banda di sopra uisando  
al quanto di sopra dalla banda di sotto, per che quelli del uisato  
che sono chiamati e uisati balti così si uide che fanno, la dose  
quelli che la linea tocca di sopra è di sopra l'ordine, non era uenuto  
anzi l'ordine si uisano et uisato per quelli che si uisano di sopra  
la uisando il uisato di sopra, per non uisato.

Fig. 2 Alessandro Allori, Ragionamento Primo. Messer Vincentio Acciaiuoli, Messer Simone Tornabuoni et Alessandro Allori, Manuscript B, c. 1566, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 41v. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

### Manuscript B (1566): *Lingua Disegnata* and the Anatomical Drawing

In his subsequent revision (Manuscript B), Allori merged theoretical and practical sections into a heterogeneous text and integrated the individual illustrations into the dialogue (Fig. 2). Even though he adopted many passages from Manuscript A<sup>22</sup>, here he further clarified the meaning of the term *disegno*. Whereas in the first version of the text, *disegno* was defined only as the foundation of painting, here it was raised to the role of «universal father» of painting, sculpture and architecture as well as of «all things»<sup>22</sup>. After the founding of the Accademia del Disegno in 1563, there was intense discussion about the meaning of *disegno*, which was evident, for example, in the debates about the academic seal<sup>23</sup>. Allori's revised meaning, however, can be best understood in light of his exchange with Vincenzio Borghini, who commissioned Allori to create a three-headed figure (a union of the three arts) to go on the Porta al Prato for the festive decorations for the wedding of Joanna of Austria and Francesco de' Medici in December 1565<sup>24</sup>.

Furthermore, Allori added a critical comment about drawing in Manuscript B. Man, according to the artist, is the most beautiful and noblest object of nature, and should be imitated by *disegno*<sup>25</sup>. In his lectures on the *paragone*, Benedetto Varchi had ranked poetry higher than painting because of its ability to reproduce human emotions<sup>26</sup>. Allori also attributed the ability to imitate human beings to *disegno*, and attempted to elevate the rank of the arts and to align «lingua disegnata» with «lingua parlata» or «lingua scritta»<sup>27</sup>. This passage may have been inspired by the discussions at the Accademia Fiorentina about language, which may have led Allori to strengthen his thesis to elevate *disegno* to the same status as writing<sup>28</sup>. Here, for the first time, Allori seems to consciously address the parallel between drawing facial features in single steps and learning the alphabet, as could be found in numerous writing books from the sixteenth-century<sup>29</sup> (Fig. 3). This allowed Allori to argue for the comparability of writing and drawing not only from a methodological point of view, but also from the standpoint of his *disegno* argument, which emphasizes the intellectual achievement of the latter. His *disegno*-theory is not only based on the opinions of Bronzino and Borghini and located in the Florentine context, but is also characterized by an intellectualizing purpose, through the analog of writing as a *lingua-disegnata*<sup>30</sup>.

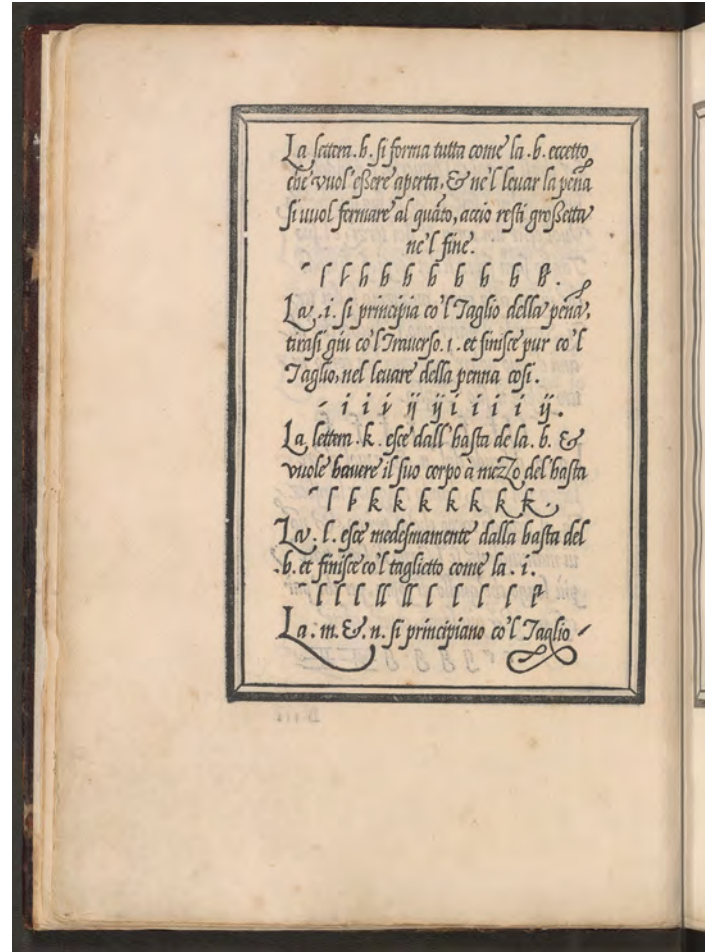


Fig. 3 Giovanni Battista Palatino, *Libro di Messer Giovambattista Palatino*, Roma 1545, fol. Biiiv. © Washington DC, Library of Congress

Anatomical drawing was given the highest importance in Manuscript B. Here, various bones and the structure of the skull are described in detail. In addition to praising Andreas Vesalius, Allori adopted the scientific terminology of his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* and referred to specific passages in the text. The new sequence of topics is striking and corresponds to the first pages of Vesalius anatomical treatise. Thus, when reading the dialogue, one gets the impression that Allori flipped through the pages of the Vesalius's treatise during his conversation with the noblemen and addressed its contents page by page<sup>31</sup>. However, the increasing

<sup>22</sup> «Come tu sai, ch'io ti ho molte volte detto, ti replico di nuovo che chi vuole in questa nostra professione della pittura, come della scultura, camminare per la buona e luminosa strada gli bisogna da prima fare i fondamenti suoi sopra il disegno, padre universale non solamente della pittura e scultura et architettura ma di tutte le cose, se non principale, almeno è buono haverlo per compagno, però di questo andremo ragionando, e massime che questo e quello, che principalmente per loro ornamento desiderano questi gentiluomini» (Manuscript B, fol. [39v]). On Vasari's comparable interpretation of the theory of *disegno*, see PFISTERER 2016, pp. 207-224.

<sup>23</sup> Cellini's designs from this period show a different attitude towards the *disegno*. See KEMP 1974, pp. 219-240; CELLINI/NOVA-SCHREURS 2003; BOHDE 2003, pp. 99-122; VON FLEMMING 2003, pp. 161-169; VEZZOSI 2015, pp. 175-183; PFISTERER 2016, pp. 207-224.

<sup>24</sup> For a description of the festive decoration designed by members of the Accademia del Disegno, see MELLINI 1566, pp. 24-25, as well as VASARI 1568, pp. 882-890, especially p. 890. In the letter written by Vincenzio Borghini to Allori there are instructions on the composition of the picture, see BOTTARI-TICOZZI 1822-1825, I, pp. 222-225. See also PETRIOLI TOFANI 2015, pp. 477-498. Furthermore, for the three-headed representation in the context of the Vasari's *Lives*, see BURIONI 2008, pp. 57-58.

<sup>25</sup> «parlando hora per l'imitatione dell'huomo, come cosa più bella e più nobile» (Manuscript B, fol. [39v]). In Manuscript A' (fol. [72r]) the praise of the human body is omitted and the discussion is immediately directed to anatomy, which according to Allori was equally crucial for painters and sculptors.

<sup>26</sup> VARCHI/BÄTSCHMANN-WEDDIGEN 2013.

<sup>27</sup> See REILLY 1999, pp. 73-74.

<sup>28</sup> NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 46-48; NANOBASHVILI 2019, pp. 35-52.

<sup>29</sup> See PALATINO 1545 and other editions.

<sup>30</sup> On the parallels between *lingua-scritta* and *lingua-disegnata*, see NANOBASHVILI 2019.

<sup>31</sup> This impression is strengthened by new research suggesting that Allori was possibly the owner of the earliest print of the *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (VESALIUS 1543; Trieste, Biblioteca Civica Attilio Hortis); cf. VESALIUS/MARGÓCSY-SOMOS-JOFFE 2018, pp. 193-94, no. I/108. I want to thank Monique Kornell for this information.





Fig. 4 Alessandro Allori, *Ragionamento primo*, Manuscript B, c. 1566, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fols. 51v-52r. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

number of corrections at the end of the dialogue in Manuscript B, make it clear that Allori found Vesalius ideas increasingly difficult to elaborate; even as he was writing, he corrected the text in numerous places. The last two pages consist only of fragments of text. The final, explicitly crossed-out page reveals Allori's despair at the difficulty he encountered in incorporating the anatomical content of Vesalius's treatise (Fig. 4).

In order to understand why anatomy was so crucial to Allori during his work on Manuscript B, we must examine its relation to artistic creation in Florence at that time. When Allori began working on the text around 1565, anatomy in the tradition of Michelangelo was a central concern in Florence among the

artists of the Accademia del Disegno, as is demonstrated by the following examples. In 1563, the dissection of corpses and the study of the internal structure of the human body were part of the curriculum of the Accademia<sup>32</sup>. In 1564, vivisection – in connection with the iconography of the myth of Marsyas – was depicted on the central panel of the catafalque for Michelangelo's funeral<sup>33</sup>. For the decorations commissioned on the occasion of the wedding of Joanna of Austria and Francesco de' Medici in 1565, Vincenzo Borghini instructed Allori to depict the study of anatomy as one of the most important tasks of academic artists<sup>34</sup>. Also, in Vincenzo Danti's extensive treatise, written at about the same time and published in 1567, anatomical themes dominate

<sup>32</sup> In one of the two statutes of the Accademia del Disegno from 1563, the second chapter states that the *consoli*, who were employed in winter, were responsible for teaching young artists about anatomy and for studying with them in Santa Maria Nuova (presumably through the dissection of cadavers); cf. BARZAMAN 2000, p. 233. For more information about the study of anatomy at the Accademia, see *ibid.*, pp. 163-169.

<sup>33</sup> See PLACKINGER 2016, pp. 227, for further literature.

<sup>34</sup> MELLINI 1566, pp. 21-25 as well as VASARI 1568, pp. 882-890, especially p. 890. Vincenzo Borghini writes to Allori with instructions for the composition of the picture; cf. BOTTARI-TICOZZI 1822-1825, I, pp. 222-225. For an essay on festive decoration, see PETRIOLI TOFANI 2015, pp. 477-498.



the text. Danti probably also wrote this for his own admission to the Accademia Fiorentina<sup>35</sup>.

In light of these observations, the fact that Allori focused his manuscript on anatomy while immersed in the environment of the Accademia del Disegno seems unsurprising. However, it is doubtful that Allori's own anatomical drawings, dated around 1560, are directly related to the *Ragionamenti*<sup>36</sup>. Stylistically, these drawings can be classified as examples of his early work<sup>37</sup>. In fact, the artist refers to these studies in his 1563 painting *Christ between Saints Cosmas and Damian*<sup>38</sup>. Since all the manuscript versions of the *Ragionamenti* were certainly created after 1565, there can be no direct connection between the artist's known anatomical studies and the text.

For the chronology of Manuscript B, it helps that an end date was annotated by Allori himself in the text. According to a marginal note, the author stopped writing at the marked point on March 4, 1566, and did not resume until November 19, 1569<sup>39</sup>. If one follows the argument given for the origin of Manuscripts A<sup>1-2</sup> and B and takes these dates into account, the following scenario could be presented as a provisional conclusion. For his admission to the Accademia Fiorentina, Allori submitted Manuscript A<sup>1</sup> in September 1565. Possibly, just after his admission, he was inspired by the demand for drawing lessons for *dilettanti* to add a practical section to his treatise (Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>). Most of Manuscript B was written before March 4, 1566, that is, before the marked passage, and it was not until November 1569 that Allori returned to it. A specific event may have inspired Allori to continue the dialogue. In August 1569, Bronzino's fresco of the *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* was unveiled in the San Lorenzo Basilica<sup>40</sup>. On the left edge of the composition, the painter depicted himself between

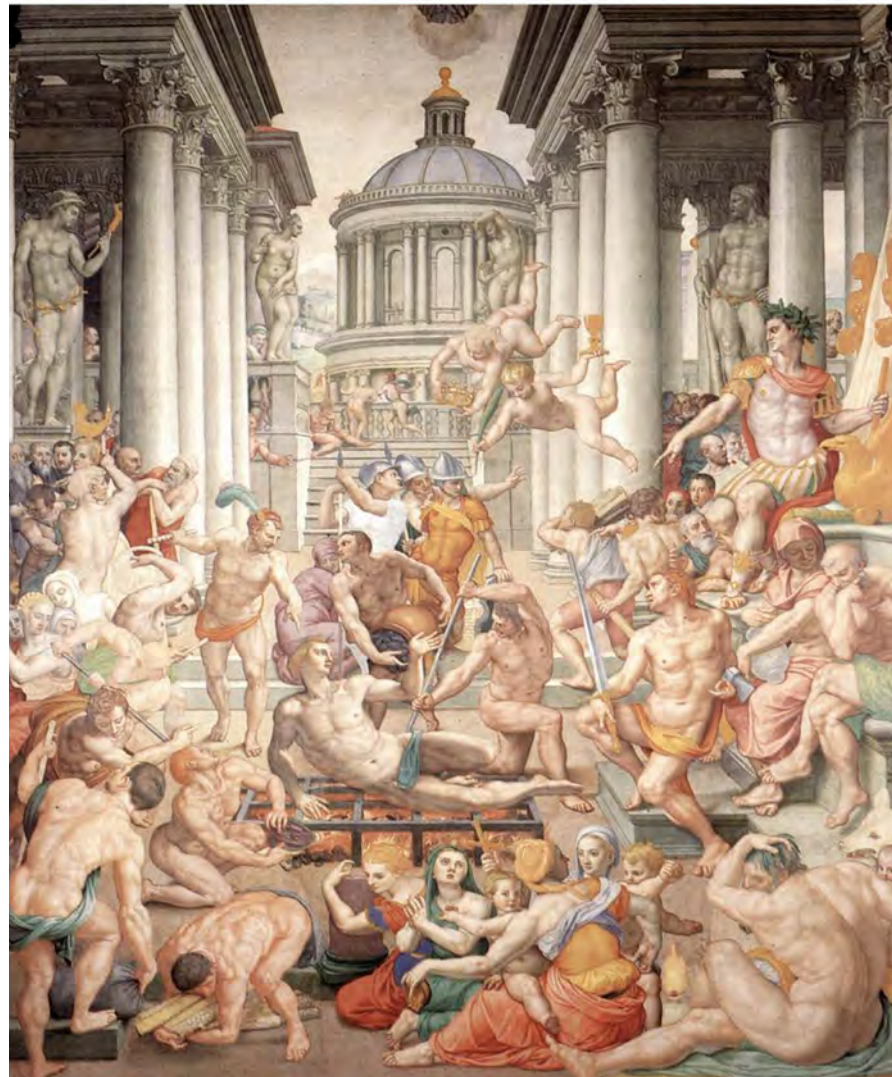


Fig. 5 Agnolo Bronzino, *The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence*, fresco, 1569. Firenze, Basilica of San Lorenzo

Pontormo and Allori (Fig. 5). In doing so, Bronzino showed Allori not only as a pupil and assistant, but as his direct heir, thus reinforcing the continuation of his genealogical lineage through his successor<sup>41</sup>. Three months after the unveiling of the fresco, Allori resumed work on the text as attested by his note, writing another five pages and then interrupting Manuscript B definitively. The return to and the subsequent fundamental revision of the

<sup>35</sup> At the end of the published *Primo Libro*, Vincenzo Danti describes the planned fourteen parts: in addition to the first ten books on anatomy and the movement of the human body, the last four volumes were to cover other subjects such as clothing, landscapes, and animals (DANTI 1567, pp. 61-62). For the treatise by Danti, see SUMMERS 1979, pp. 292-297, and DAVIS 1982, pp. 63-84.

<sup>36</sup> On Allori's anatomical drawings, see HEIKAMP 1956, p. 43; LECCHINI GIOVANNONI 1991, illustrations on p. 436; KORNELL 1992, pp. 177-182; CARLINO 2009, p. 29, figs. 92-97. The affiliation between the drawings and the manuscript is asserted especially by those researchers who date versions C to E to before 1565 in the tradition of CIARDI 1971.

<sup>37</sup> It has been suggested that Allori used these representations of skeletons in the works for Michelangelo's funeral. However, this consideration must remain speculative because of the lack of pictorial evidence. See CIARDI-TONGIORGI 1984, pp. 82.

<sup>38</sup> Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Inv. 1329, c. 1560, oil on wood. For a detailed discussion of this painting, see NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 6-12. KORNELL (1992, pp. 180-182, figs. 182-183) attributes to Allori two other paintings from the same period showing the crucifixion of Christ, which are equally related to these anatomical studies: Alessandro Allori and workshop, *Crucifixion with skeleton*, oil on canvas, c. 1560, private collection, Florence; *Crucifixion with skeleton*, oil on canvas, c. 1560, Badia di Cava de' Tirreni.

<sup>39</sup> «Restovi allo 4 di Marzo 1566», and below it «Ricomincia alli 19 di Novembre 1569» (Manuscript B, fol. [50r]). In addition, there is another year written on the third page of MANUSCRIPT B in the margin: «l'anno 1565, incirca ad 1566» (fol. [34r]). This last indication is not necessarily to be understood as a dating of the respective passage, as it has been interpreted by researchers so far (cf. CIARDI 1971, p. 276). Rather, it was intended to define more precisely the aforementioned cleaning of Masaccio's frescoes.

<sup>40</sup> BARR 2006, pp. 12-21.

<sup>41</sup> On the relationship between Bronzino and Allori, see PILLIOD 2001, especially pp. 97-112. After Pontormo's death there was a dispute over his inheritance. While Bronzino was declared Pontormo's artistic successor soon after his death in 1557 and was allowed to complete his unfinished works, a dispute over his possessions, including drawings, went on for several years (*ibid.*, pp. 113-144).

*Ragionamenti* resulting in a new revision (Manuscript C) could have been stimulated by the desire on his part to emphasize his relationship with Bronzino even more strongly<sup>42</sup>.

### Manuscripts C, D' and E (1570s): The Importance of Florentine Lineage Allori-Bronzino-Pontormo

For the new version C, which according to the aforementioned marginal note was written after 1569, Allori completely changed the form of his text. Here the dialogue only takes place between Alessandro Allori and his teacher Agnolo Bronzino in the house of the latter<sup>43</sup>. The topics continue to be theoretical questions on the concept of *disegno* followed by practical lessons that teach the art of drawing. Allori could have changed the dialogue form for practical reasons; the content could be conveyed more clearly by two participants than through conversation among six speakers<sup>44</sup>. Much more noticeable, however, is the prominent presence of Bronzino who often performs what could be described almost as a monologue. Allori, as the author, appears in Manuscript C as his teacher's scribe, recording Bronzino's thoughts on theory and practice. The emphasis on Bronzino's role suggests that there was an even greater reason for completely changing the dialogue form: to pay special tribute to his master. With the unveiling of Bronzino's fresco in San Lorenzo in 1569, Allori seems to have realized the possibilities of his text and returned to Manuscript B, but he formulated the new Manuscript C some years later, after Bronzino's death in 1572. By giving his teacher a dominant role in the dialogue, the writing functions as a *memoria* of Bronzino, presenting Allori as his heir and chronicler, recording the master's thoughts and ideas for future generations<sup>45</sup>. At the same time, the *Ragionamenti* from Manuscript C onward can be read as a revival of the themes from around 1560, when Bronzino, Luca Martini and Benedetto Varchi

were still alive. In fact, the shift of the action into the past and the inclusion of themes discussed at that time initially led some scholars to date this dialogue before manuscripts A<sup>1-2</sup> and B<sup>46</sup>.

Allori's interpretation of *disegno* as a simple line without light and relief is retained from Manuscripts C onwards. The association of «disegno» with the term «dintorni» introduces an additional level of interpretation<sup>47</sup>. Vasari had previously used this term to indicate representations of the interior of the body<sup>48</sup>. Contemporaries also used «dintorni» to describe Michelangelo's drawings<sup>49</sup>. By using the same word, Allori made the subject concrete, which should be imitated by *disegno* (i.e., the interior of the body). At the same time, he placed his theory within the tradition of Michelangelo's work.

For the following manuscripts D' and E, it is significant that Allori made his position even more clear. In Manuscript C he differentiated between the description of *disegno* in the vernacular («volgare»)<sup>50</sup>. In manuscripts D' and E he clarified his position by changing the vernacular («volgare») to the corrupted vocabulary («corrotto vocabolo») of everyday spoken language<sup>51</sup>. Distancing himself from the latter, Allori presented his own theory about the origin of *disegno* based on a passage from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* about drawing, according to which, at the beginning of time, the first thing to do in order to imitate nature is to trace the shadow of subjects with a line<sup>52</sup>. This was not the same passage about the romance of the daughter of the Corinthian potter Dibutades, which was well known since the publication of the second edition of Vasari's *Lives* in 1568. The text from Pliny chosen by Allori located *disegno* exclusively within the context of painting and did not also imply the birth of sculpture, as it had been described by Vasari and later by Raffaello Borghini<sup>53</sup>. By corrupted vocabulary («corrotto vocabolo») Allori probably meant Vasari's theory

<sup>42</sup> The interruption after a few pages may have been for formal reasons in addition to those related to the challenges of the content (in relation to anatomy). Among the noblemen mentioned in 1567, Vincenzo Acciaiuoli and Simone Tornabuoni were also appointed as the knights of the Ordine di Santo Stefano beside Andrea Minerbetti. It therefore became necessary to address them in the dialogue as «cavaliere» instead of more generally as «messere». This change is incorporated from Manuscript C onward, cf. CIARDI 1971, p. 277, and REILLY 1999, pp. 156-160.

<sup>43</sup> The dialogue is not in the Ciceronian style, as the versions in manuscripts A' and B. Rather, it is modeled on Seneca's style, which was also used in some art theoretical treatises of the sixteenth-century, including by GAURICUS 1504, PINO 1548, and DOLCE 1557. In accordance with the chosen form, no concrete events are mentioned here (nor dates inserted), that could help date Manuscript C. See REILLY 1999, pp. 36-44, and pp. 90-91.

<sup>44</sup> HEIKAMP 1956, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> It is noteworthy that in the paintings from the years 1570-80, Allori also referenced the work of Bronzino (alongside that of Michelangelo and Bandinelli). From the 1580s onward, Allori also signed his name as «ALESSANDRO BRONZINO ALLORI», establishing himself as the representative of Bronzino. For more on this, see PILLIOD 2001, pp. 113-114, and BARR 2006, pp. 106-108.

<sup>46</sup> Previous research (mostly based on the opinion of CIARDI 1971) has used the argument that the dialogue reflects the historical present and for this reason was written in the 1560s. For example, the statements of Bronzino are often cited in the literature as his words and not as Allori's interpretation of his master. See BAMBACH 2010, pp. 35-50.

<sup>47</sup> «Messer Agnolo: [...] dico che per disegno intend'io una imitatione espressiva di tutte quelle cose che si possono formare con la forza delle semplici linee»; and «Per linee intend'io come noi diciamo dintorni, et in somma tutte quelle cose che non hanno né ombre né lumi» (Manuscript C, fol. [81r]). With a few changes, cf. also Manuscript D', fol. [56v], and Manuscript E, fol. [1v]) in ALLORI/BAROCCHI 1973, p. 1944. This term is already mentioned in passing in the first version, along with «linee» and «lineamenti». In the revision, lines are also explicitly called «dintorni».

<sup>48</sup> For more on Vasari's use of the terms *lineamenti* / *dintorni* for the interior of the body, as opposed to the term *contorni* for the outlines, see REILLY 1999, pp. 96-98.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105-115.

<sup>50</sup> «Messer Agnolo: Differenza sarà se noi vogliamo oggi ragionare secondo la volgare oppenione, o veramente secondo per quanto conosco mi pare la verita della cosa» (Manuscript C, fol. [81r]).

<sup>51</sup> «Messer Agnolo: Differenza sarà se noi vogliamo oggi ragionare secondo il corrotto vocabolo di che ci serviamo generalmente, opur', per quanto io intenda, andar' cercando della verità della cosa» (Manuscript D', fol. [56v]). With a few changes, cf. Manuscript E, fol. [2r] in ALLORI/BAROCCHI 1973, p. 1945, and REILLY 1999, p. 99.

<sup>52</sup> «[Messer Agnolo:] quelli primi che volsero cominciar con l'arte a immitare dalla natura, cominciarono a dintornar le cose con una linea sola, o per via dell'ombra che fanno le cose battute dal sole, o si veramente quelle che derivano dal lume di candela o di lucerna, ricevuta l'ombra sopra parete o muro piano; et questo è quello ch'io chiamo disegno»; and «chi fusse di questo curioso veggia Plinio nel trentacinquesimo libro al quarto capitolo, il quale ne tratta secondo l'oppenione si degli antichi avanti a lui, come di quelli che furono ne' suoi tempi maestri eccellentissimi» (Manuscript D', fol. [57r]); cf. Manuscript E, fol. [2r-2v] in ALLORI/BAROCCHI 1973, p. 1945. In sixteenth-century Italian editions, a comparable passage is found in the fourth chapter of the thirty-fifth book of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (35.5, [14-15]). For comparison, a more recent translation of the passages of Pliny referred to by Allori is offered here for comparison, since the wording in the editions of *Naturalis Historia* between 1534 and 1580 varies considerably and it cannot be determined which source Allori relied on: «Sugli inizi della pittura regna grande incertezza [...] tutti però concordano nel dire che nacque dall'uso di contornare l'ombra umana con una linea», quoted from ALLORI/BAROCCHI 1973, pp. 145-146, note 3.

<sup>53</sup> VASARI 1568 (in the introductory letter of Giovanni Battista Adriani) and BORGHINI 1584 (p. 255) tell the story of Dibutades, described by Pliny in the twelfth chapter of the thirty-fifth book (35.43, [151]). For the two passages in Pliny, see STOICHITA 1999, pp. 11-20; for more on Pliny, see BLAKE MCHAM 2013, pp. 255-287, 322-345.



of *disegno*, which he wanted to present in opposition to his own position<sup>54</sup>. These last manuscripts D' and E can be read as attempts to present an alternative to Vasari's established theses. Vasari's publication shows how much he tried to write a certain history of the artists' lives, sometimes overlooking their role and success. It is remarkable that he did not emphasize the relationship between Allori, Bronzino and Pontormo more, considering that at least two of them did this themselves in many noticeable ways and that their connection was apparent to their contemporaries<sup>55</sup>. In 1569, Bronzino portrayed himself next to his master Pontormo and his pupil Allori in his fresco in the San Lorenzo Basilica, underscoring this lineage just one year after Vasari's second edition of the *Lives* was printed<sup>56</sup>. Allori had to assert his position as Bronzino's successor and heir at the Medici court and at the Accademia del Disegno in competition with Vasari. He did so through his first large commission in Florence, painting the Montauti Chapel in the Basilica of the Santissima Annunziata in the tradition of Michelangelo and clearly presenting his artistic circle and status<sup>57</sup>. Insisting on his lineage seems to have become even more urgent for him after the death of Bronzino in 1572. This was the time when Allori could have continued to write his *Ragionamenti* and stressed their relationship.

Vasari's role and importance in the founding of the Accademia del Disegno has been recognized many times. But here, he followed his politics against some Florentine artists, similar to what we read in his *Lives*. Considering this, it is less surprising that only after Vasari's death in 1574 Allori could add the portraits of Pontormo and Bronzino to his altar of the Holy Trinity in the chapel of San Luca in the Basilica of the Santissima Annunziata (Fig. 6)<sup>58</sup>. The role of Bronzino as one of the co-founders of the Accademia del Disegno, as well as the importance of Pontormo, whose remains were moved from the nave of the church of the Santissima Annunziata to the San Luca Chapel, was undisputed<sup>59</sup>. However, it took Vasari's passing for Allori to be able to add their portraits to his altarpiece and in this way create a monument to them within the sacred space of the Accademia del Disegno.

Allori's effort to highlight the role of Bronzino in his *Ragionamenti* and his creation of the Manuscripts C, D' and E can also be read as a counter-reaction to Vasari. The last version, E, even contains a pictorial reference to Pontormo. The images inserted in four initials at the beginning of each chapter of the *Ragionamenti* reference Pontormo's works<sup>60</sup>. Two of them in particular, *The Birth of Eve* (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2) and *The Fall of Man* (Fig. 10), have direct ties with Pontormo's destroyed frescoes in



Fig. 6 Alessandro Allori, *The Holy Trinity*, fresco, 1571. Firenze, Basilica of the Santissima Annunziata, San Luca Chapel

the San Lorenzo Basilica<sup>61</sup>. By adding this formal reference to the content of the dialogue, Allori primarily intended to reinforce his Florentine genealogical lineage. At the same time, he evoked the church, which was of enormous importance to the Medici family and included major artworks by Bronzino, Pontormo and Michelangelo. Clearly Allori wished to become part of this canon and to be as widely acknowledged as his master.

<sup>54</sup> On Allori's vehement distancing from the ideas of Vasari and on the significance of the «corrotto vocabolo», see REILLY 1999, pp. 93-105.

<sup>55</sup> PILLIOD (2001, pp. 1-10, 145-208, and 2003) describes Vasari's hostility toward Allori and Bronzino and how the former tried to break up their genealogy in the *Lives*.

<sup>56</sup> For more about the dispute between Naldini and Bronzino over Pontormo's succession, see PILLIOD 2001, pp. 113-144.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-185.

<sup>58</sup> WAŻBIŃSKI 1987, I, pp. 111-154; BARZMAN 2000, pp. 23-59; BARONI-MEIJER 2015, pp. 151-165. On the *Holy Trinity* fresco by Allori, see LECCHINI GIOVANNONI 1991, p. 229, no. 31; PILLIOD 2001, pp. 113-114, and p. 118 note 11.

<sup>59</sup> WAŻBIŃSKI 1987, I, pp. 111-154; BARZMAN 2000, pp. 23-59; BARONI-MEIJER 2015, pp. 151-165.

<sup>60</sup> For the first book of Manuscript E, all four initials are almost completely illustrated, while for the second one only the empty boxes serve as placeholders. Illustrations are found in the initial «B» - *The Fall of Man* (fol. [1r]), in the initial «E» - *The Birth of Eve* (fol. [7v]), in the initial «I» - *Jonah and the Whale* (?) (fol. [11r]), in the initial «A» - *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (fol. [14r]). On the parallel with Pontormo and for a detailed description of the initials, see NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 72-80.

<sup>61</sup> On Pontormo's controversial choice of subject, see STOICHITA 1988, pp. 127-144; COX REARICK 1992, pp. 239-248; FIRPO 1997, pp. 408-423. For new arguments on the frescoes, see PILLIOD 2022, pp. 64-84.



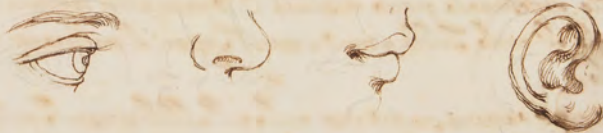
DELLE REGOLE DEL DISEGNO

RAG. II



Ma Agnolo poi che così vi piace ed è questo giorno  
sia la seconda volta che voi vi degnate di andar  
seguitando la cominciata impresa, ecco che io mess  
tutto in ordine quello che è richiesto a ciò facci di biso  
gno e disegnare, et anche vedete quanto  
in questi giorni passati si sia studiato nel dis  
gno da questi nobiliissimi signori, e come bene era  
sciuto di essi si uadia accomodando nel ritrarre  
i vostri disegni, ed è credo ne sentiate contento grandissimo.

M. Agn.°: Peramente ed io lo uisio cosa che non solamente mi piace infinitamente  
ma mi fa ueramente stupire ed è in sì poco tempo habbino costati sig.  
fatto sì buoni acquisti e quanto a me sarò sempre prontissimo nel serui  
gli e quanto potremo maggior. Lo farei me et facendo mess in ord.  
quello che fa di bisogno e disegnare lo dunque son d'animo di far per  
ordine continuato tutto lo quattro parti e formar la testa in profilo  
ed è facemmo alle giorni passati e farò il torso intero et il capo e la  
bocca insieme con l'orecchie sono alcuni spartiti, ueggendo mas  
sime ed i lor ritratti son ridotti a tante buon'forme ed non occor  
reca lo innanzi molte divisioni, et sono di nuovo a consigliare et  
si di fare buon num. però ed è una delle maggiori importanti  
ed intorno a questo auuertire vi posso. Hora attendi.



Aless.°: Io non posso né debbo se non approvare tutto quello che di presente haue  
disegnato, et ordinato però aggrato con desiderio et allegrezza grandissima  
lo spiegare del concetto vostro, ed se io non mal mi ricordo era questo  
giorno di trattare delle misure tanto l'altezza quanto per larghezza  
di questi studi, ed se si son fatti e la testa in profilo

M. Agn.°

Fig. 7.1 Alessandro Allori, Il primo libro de' Ragionamenti sulle regole del disegno d'Alessandro Allori con Messer Agnolo Bronzino. Ragionamento primo, Manuscript E, late 1570s, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 7v. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale



### Allori's ABC and a New Drawing Manual: Methods of Learning

The last two manuscripts of the *Ragionamenti*, D<sup>1-2</sup> and E, are characterized by a clear orientation toward education. However, the ABC method for learning to draw step-by-step was employed for the first time in the printed drawing books produced in the circle of the Carracci or by Odoardo Fialetti at the beginning of the seventeenth-century<sup>62</sup>. These books were revolutionary for their clear instructions and their accessibility, so their content circulated widely soon after their appearance. That Allori began the so-called *didactic* part of his text with the ABC method, that is drawing individual parts of the face, is hardly surprising. This method had been widely used and recognized since the beginning of the sixteenth-century<sup>63</sup>. In accordance with workshop training, artists had provided books of patterns with collections of examples for their apprentices since the Middle Ages<sup>64</sup>.

The earliest example of drawing instructions for the human face, which clarifies the rules of the ABC method, is the sketchbook from the workshop of Francesco di Simone Ferrucci created around 1487-88<sup>65</sup>. Antonio Mini also learned to draw around 1520 by studying individual body through the drawings of Michelangelo<sup>66</sup>. At about the same time, Benvenuto Cellini recalled that his apprenticeship, in accordance with widespread practice, began with the drawing of the eye<sup>67</sup>. Already in 1527, the ABC method is explicitly mentioned by Antonio Tagliente<sup>68</sup>. From the second half of the sixteenth-century onwards, one finds numerous representations of a young art student holding the drawing of an eye in their hand, which is intended to identify him as a beginner, as seen for example in the fresco of the *Sala del Disegno* in Palazzo Zuccari<sup>69</sup>. Thus, it is unsurprising that Allori also chose the ABC method to begin his drawing course, starting with the eyes. At the same time, no printed edition of a manual with this method existed in Allori's time. For this reason, he had to come up with his own way of teaching the method ABC in his *Ragionamenti*.



Fig. 7.2 Alessandro Allori, *The Birth of Eve*, Initial «E» (detail), Manuscript E, late 1570s, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 7v. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

In all the manuscripts, from A to E, the teaching of the individual features consisted of a description as a whole first and then in step-by-step instructions from the first to the last line. Also, the sequence of the facial features is the same in all versions, but the way Allori mediates the student's interaction with the images changes several times. In Manuscript A<sup>2</sup> (the earliest version), both the images and the individual lines are meticulously marked with letters (Fig. 1). This results in long

<sup>62</sup> The earliest printed drawing books using the ABC method include: FIALETTI 1608; FRANCO 1611; VALESIO [c. 1606-1616]; CARRACCI-CIAMBERLANO-STEFANONI [ante 1614].

<sup>63</sup> For the meaning and intellectual context of the ABC method, see NANOBASHVILI 2019, pp. 35-52.

<sup>64</sup> ELEN 1995.

<sup>65</sup> London, The British Museum, Inv. 1875,0612.16, Francesco di Simone Ferrucci, *Studies*, pen and brown ink, over black chalk, 250x187 mm; verso inscribed: «Michele mio io mi ti rachomando per le mille volte mandoti questa figure». On the Ferrucci sketchbook, see AMES-LEWIS 1985, pp. 213-217; CORVI 2005, pp. 243-247; PISANI 2007, especially pp. 82-87, figs. 158-209; and NANOBASHVILI 2019, pp. 35-52.

<sup>66</sup> PERRIG 1994, pp. 15-18; SCHUMACHER 2007, p. 91, figs. 42-43.

<sup>67</sup> «Sicchè a me pare che e' sia stato un grande inconveniente per infino a oggi, per quanto io ho veduto, li maestri mettere innanzi a i poveretti tenerissimi giovani per il loro principij a imitare e ritrarre un occhio umano; e perchè il simile intervenne a me nella mia puerizia, così penso che agli altri avvenuto sia» (cf. CELLINI/BAROCCHI 1973, pp. 1934-1935). A drawing of Cellini (attributed also to Michelangelo) in Hamburg would underline his statement that he was trained precisely with this method: Kunsthalle, Inv. 21904, *Line Studies, Parts of Faces and Profiles*, pen and ink, 205x254 mm. In addition, see PERRIG 1994, pp. 145-146, no. 39; SCHUMACHER 2007, pp. 87-90, no. 82. On Cellini's criticism of the ABC method, see NANOBASHVILI 2019, pp. 44-51.

<sup>68</sup> «Tutti gli famosi maestri et illustri inventori de ogni arte et scienza conchiudono che chiunque vuol dar cominciamento all'imparar di cascuna honesta industria et disciplina, come sarebbe a dire uno vuol imparar leggere, imprima ha di mestieri dar principio a cognoscer la lettera A et dopo la lettera B, et così dal principio per insin al fine bisogna seguire. Similmente, quelli che vogliono imparare a disegnare una figura intiera, inanzi che egli si porga a tirar fuori detta figura intiera, gli fa bisogno imparare a disegnare uno occhio, una orecchia, una mano col braccio, un piede, una testa integra, et a poco a poco tutte le membra del corpo humano, le quali sapendo ben disegnare, potrà etiamdio trasportare et lo corpo intiero proportionatamente formare» (TAGLIENTE 1527, fol. Diiv-Diiir).

<sup>69</sup> On the painting in Palazzo Zuccari, see KLIEMANN 2013, pp. 138-181. Further examples are in NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 35-42.



RAGIONAMENTI DELLE REGOLE



Ma Anzi se ben quest ultima fronte che mostra il profilo intero si poteva far senza ridite=  
gnarla di nuovo, anzi scrivirsi della prima, non voglio perdonar a fatica alcuna i non di meno  
na per che, ci assicuriamo che sia bene, il così fare, e però questa di mostra  
+ ridotta in tre chiusioni la intero profilo, ne ricordare, che tutte sene facciamo  
non si fanno numero prima, che li medesimo in anime: e si uerra g' hora alla come alla molte volte ti ho r'phor  
regola si s'orian l'orechio, il quale forma al quinto difficile, e le bozze fine  
delle 2<sup>te</sup> Chio disegno di scrivimi ma molto piu fructuoso che un possibile e per al ultimo imitando lo esempio som bro nello  
alla imitazione di quanto si notano a lo, concludi di dimostrare, e però ho fatto prima un quadro grande quanto tu il uolere  
di un uol per una tela maggiore, o mica, il quale ho poi ridotto in uolte quadretti uguali, e quita di separare tanto quanto non basta  
latina con il profilo della bocca, capelli, e tutto l'altro dove ho poi finito di uolte quadretti uguali, che uolte con la botola, che  
quando si fanno di questa le sue distanze, si uolte in ordine intorno del quadro per al altro non si possono



secondo ch'io e di qua uerra  
come uedi, e che ti ho mostrato con la misura, l'orechio è alto primamente, quanto  
è l'una delle tre parti dell' altezza di tutto il profilo, et esso è posto nel  
mello tra il occhio, et naso, a tale che tirate la due linee, per uerserò come  
uedi di sopra, e le segnaremo a questo dal A al B, e dal C al D; e di poi di uer  
se in tre parti, come uedi di sopra, uerra l'orechio occuparne la metà forse si quel quadro doue è tirata  
si come si uede, che quarta occupa il naso, il resto poi che <sup>occupo</sup> l'orechio  
scrue <sup>può</sup> al luogo doue comincia la gola, come in quest altra fronte uechra che uolte non si chiama di lo scoto  
+ a uero uedi come l'orechio dal canto dell' osso dell' occhio <sup>si uerra</sup> cioè uer so la coda, al  
desso occhio rimane lo spazio uero di una delle tre parti piu presto nel piu che  
nel meno, et molto quando <sup>si uerra</sup> l'osatura di tutto il quadro doue finira  
misacchi di lo scoto e loro <sup>si uerra</sup> finira in il principio di quella di lo scoto

La fine dell' <sup>non</sup> Anace ~~libro~~

Fig. 8 Alessandro Allori, Il primo libro de' Ragionamenti sulle regole del disegno d'Alessandro Allori con Messer Agnolo Bronzino, Manuscript D, c. 1575, Ms Fondo Palatino E.B. 16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 61v. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale



descriptions and multiple repetitions of several instructions, which has a confusing effect. In the subsequent Manuscript B, the different parts of the face are marked with letters and the individual lines with numbers for more clarity. This caption style is retained in Manuscript C. After a further revision, in Manuscript D<sup>12</sup> only the individual images and not the intermediate steps are marked. Finally, in Manuscript E, all annotations disappear. The development from detailed annotations to their removal does not seem to be at all natural for Allori. It took him several revisions to realize that the annotations were not necessary at all. As a result, he developed an eloquent visual language with clear illustrations.

Allori followed the same path in his search for a method of written instructions for the next step: the unification of the individual features to form a profile. In all the versions of the text this process begins with the organization of the profile into three equal fields from the chin to the hairline, in accord with the Vitruvian principle<sup>70</sup>. This allows the positions of the nose, the mouth and parts of the eyes to be defined. For the placement of the ear, as well as the width of the head, however, a different method was suggested in each version. In Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, Allori drew a triangle to define the width of the head and the position of the ear<sup>71</sup>. However, this approach required long and cumbersome instructions with many specifications. In the revised Manuscript B, Allori continued to wrestle with the same approach but numbered the auxiliary lines and the single steps with more letters<sup>72</sup>. In Manuscript C, the text ends early and a discussion of the rules of proportion is not included. The following Manuscript D is decisive for Allori. At first, he copied from Manuscript B the organization of the profile into three parts and the grid structure line by line, making only minor changes (Fig. 8)<sup>73</sup>. Then, during the revision of this version, Allori elaborated an extremely simple solution, which he sketched with a pen next to the existing chalk drawing. The small rectangles were completed



Fig. 9 Hans Sebald Beham, *Warhafftige Beschreibung von aller fürneme Künsten*, Frankfurt am Main 1605, fol. Biiiv. © Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek

to form a large square by adding two segments. This created a geometric shape with nine equal sides that frame the entire head. The degree to which this improved the instructions was demonstrated in the final version, Manuscript E<sup>74</sup>. The design could now be conveyed in just two steps accompanied by a short text. The added polygon shape around the head clearly specified the head's height and width, as well as the placement of all the individual features, making the naming of several intermediate steps unnecessary.

<sup>70</sup> Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, fol. [75r], Manuscript B, fols. [46v]-[47r], Manuscript D<sup>1</sup>, fols. [60v]-[61r], and Manuscript E, fol. [8r]. In Manuscript C this step is missing. The scheme is also found in the album of drawings and sketches (so-called *Bauhüttenbuch*) by Villard de Honnecourt (BnF, Ms Français 19093, c. 1230, fol. 36). Also, Leonardo da Vinci used this structure in the drawings of the *Libro di Pittura* (BAV, Ms Urb.lat.1270, c. 1540, fols. 53-54). In sixteenth-century passages, however, this method is often described in a somewhat roundabout way, as for example in PINO 1548 and ARMENINI 1587, p. 94. On the reception of Vitruvius and on his editions, see ZÖLLNER 1987. Bronzino is also said to have worked with a proportion grid, so that Allori could have already been acquainted with comparable methods in his workshop. For more, see BAMBACH 2010, pp. 41-43.

<sup>71</sup> Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, fol. [75v].

<sup>72</sup> Manuscript B, fols. [47r]-[47v].

<sup>73</sup> Manuscript D<sup>1</sup>, fol. [61v].

<sup>74</sup> Manuscript E, fol. [9r].



IL PRIMO LIBRO  
 DE RAGIONAMENTI DELLE REGOLE  
 DEL DISEGNO D'ALESSANDRO ALIORI  
 CON M. AGNOLO BRONZINO  
 RAGIONAMENTO PRIMO

ALESS.



OVI PREGO M. AGNOLO, che e ui piaccia di  
 farmi quella gratia, che tante volte ui ho doman-  
 data, per parte di que nobilissimi Conti huomini  
 de quali son tanto familiare.

M. AG.

Ricordami quale, perciò che io nel uero non l'ho  
 hora così bene a mente.

ALESS.

Non u'ho io detto molte volte che il Cavalier Sig:  
 Andrea di Ruggieri Minorotti il Cavalier Vincenzio Acciaiuoli fi-  
 gliuolo del Signor Carlo, il Sig. Cavalier Simone di Donato Tornabuoni  
 il Sig. Tommaso di Apollino del Piero, il Sig. Cosimo di Palla Ruella  
 et il Sig. Menandro di Grammaria Soppi, desiderano anai d'imparare  
 a disegnare et che al pari degli altri loro studi et de' detti huomini con  
 uengano l'appetendo: et uorrebbero per molto mio onore da uoi ueruno  
 a ciò quello regole, et quelle auuertimenti, che uoi meglio, che alcun altro  
 potete, loro insegnare, et non passa mai quattro giorni, che qualche un d'essi  
 non me lo ricordi, e pur oggi non ho potuto parlarne, et m'ha accen-  
 nato anco che non ne danno la colpa a me, che e' in uero mi comento as-  
 sai, et bene ho molte volte fatto mia scusa con lor Signorie, et io ui uoglio  
 occupatissimo in molti studi, et de' altre faccende appartenenti, alla *Pratica*, al *arte*  
 et non mi sono addito accusarui molestia, et per tal conto et non per altro  
 non ho fatto di così spesso parlaruene ma ben ui prego, poiché oggi ho  
 l'ora della *del compo*, et del freddo m'ha fatto ritirare a casa due ore  
 prima, et io non tarei fatto et che non mi pare d'auerui uisto è gran tempo  
 quare oggi più ato a dar principij a così fatta materia, però ui prego  
 di mi piacere far a tutti questo fauore, non essendo manimo da partirmi d'inter-  
 no a questo buon fuoco

M. AG.

Questa tua domanda trattando de' principij da potete passare di leggere  
 come tu credi, anco bisognano molte considerazioni a quanto son riuscito da  
 lor Signorie, et date, et e' ho in luogo di figliuolo, calmente, et per questo  
 giorno ti licentio, et domand'ci auuertiremo, et ti darò qualche principij di

intermo

Fig. 10 Alessandro Allori, *Il Primo Libro de' Ragionamenti sulle Regole del Disegno d'Alessandro Allori con Messer Agnolo Bronzino. Ragionamento Primo*, Manuscript E, late 1570s, Ms Fondo Palatino E. B.16.4 striscia 1415, fol. 1r. © Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale



When analyzing Allori's revised steps, the question arises as to what pre-existing knowledge he drew upon when working out the *Ragionamenti*. Many of the diagrams mentioned above appeared well-known works by Hieronymus Rodler, Albrecht Dürer and Piero della Francesca<sup>75</sup>. It is remarkable, however, that the polygon shape and the placement of the head correspond above all to the diagram elaborated by Sebald Beham<sup>76</sup> (Fig. 9). It is possible that Allori had seen this representation when revising version, Manuscript D<sup>1,2</sup>, and only then recognized the simplified method. However, whether an edition of Beham existed in Florence or whether Allori arrived at his solution independently, cannot be conclusively established<sup>77</sup>.

After analyzing Allori's instructions for the ABC method as well as the rules of proportion in the different versions of his *Ragionamenti*, two aspects should be emphasized. First, the comparison of the different versions attests to the fact that the manuscripts were written in the order proposed here. Secondly, for the ABC method, as in the case of geometry and anatomy, it is significant that Allori started writing his drawing lessons in Manuscript A<sup>2</sup>, including long instructions and a few illustrations, and by Manuscript E had developed an image-based manual with relatively little text. This way, Allori followed other authors who over the course of the sixteenth-century found ever new visual strategies, placed them in the foreground, and elevated illustrations to a central medium of communication<sup>78</sup>. Manuscript D<sup>1</sup> shows how extensively Allori had thought through his *Ragionamenti* in the previous versions. This manuscript is characterized by the length of its chapters. After learning the ABC steps, the combination of the individual features of the head according to geometric methods and the representations of the head in different views in the first book of the *Ragionamenti*, in the second book the reader encounters anatomy. This begins with the anatomy of the head known to Allori and treats only select details. It no longer claims to describe all bones and muscles, as in manuscripts A and B. In the section that follows, dedicated to the anatomy of the eye, Allori focuses on the structure of the crystalline lens. Following this, he explains that the study of the head should be followed by the depiction of the arms, legs, torso and the entire body in terms of bones, muscles and skin<sup>79</sup>. In Manuscript D<sup>1,2</sup>, only the study of arms and legs is described and illustrated, but remarkably, for the first time here Allori formulates the following step—the understanding of the entire body—as his goal. This goal is expressed only after the

successful teaching of the anatomy of the head, something that he had failed at in the earlier versions. Therefore, it seems that for Allori, it was only by overcoming the previous difficulties that he was able to think about the continuation of his manual. This final observation about the creation of the longest version of the *Ragionamenti*, Manuscript D<sup>1,2</sup>, illustrates a crucial point for Allori's work method. It shows that he planned neither the entire scope nor the individual aspects of his text from the beginning, but rather defined both while writing.

### Manuscript E (late 1570s): Preparation for Printing

The above comparison of the five versions of the *Ragionamenti* illustrates the challenges that Allori faced. Ultimately, the following can be concluded about their genesis. As I argued, Manuscript A was probably written in 1565 for admission to the Accademia Fiorentina in that the same year, while Manuscript B followed immediately the year after. Here, Allori revised the previous version, but interrupted his writing and did not return to the text until 1569. The unveiling of Bronzino's fresco in San Lorenzo Basilica, also in 1569, and the discussions it provoked may have prompted Allori to return to his text. A complete revision of the form of the dialogue and the prominent role of his teacher as seen in the new Manuscript C likely made sense in the context of Bronzino's death in 1572.

Often topics discussed in the later versions of the *Ragionamenti* (Manuscripts C, D<sup>1,2</sup> and E) appear also in Allori's paintings from the 1570s. Most prominent among them is the extensively discussed description of eye anatomy in Manuscripts C and D<sup>2</sup> and, similarly, the depiction of a dissected eye in the painting *Virgin Mary with John the Baptist and Saints* from 1575 (Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence)<sup>80</sup>. Around the same time, Allori was also working on the frescoes for the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, the subjects of which referenced Pontormo's fresco program in San Lorenzo<sup>81</sup>. At the same time, many of these motifs appear in the initials of Manuscript E, as described earlier. Thus, this iconographic argument also supports locating manuscripts C, D<sup>1,2</sup> and E in the mid to late 1570s.

Among the five versions, E is an elaborate version with a font similar to *cancelleresca* and decorated capital letters (Fig. 10). The accurate writing and mirrored images in the capital letters, as well as the anatomical motifs, indicate that Manuscript E was created for the press. Unfortunately, the text of this last version also ends abruptly after describing the

<sup>75</sup> The use of the triangle was well known from PACIOLI 1509 (Tract 1, fol. 28r) to FIALETTI 1608 (fol. B2). Likewise, in RODLER 1531 (fol. Giiiv), DÜRER 1528 (fol. Uiiir), and Piero della Francesca's *De Prospetiva Pingendi* (BPPE, Ms Reggiani A 41/2, 1470-1492, fol. 79r) one finds grids on which Allori drew from for all his versions. Possibly he knew all these images from BARBARO 1569.

<sup>76</sup> BEHAM 1552.

<sup>77</sup> Between 1552 and 1605, six editions of the textbook by Sebald Beham were published. On this see GEDOVA 2014, pp. 148-150, and HEILMANN 2017, pp. 19-24. The fact that Beham's book was widespread and especially well-received in the context of artistic training testifies to the adoption of the same square in a print of Tobias Stimmer (1564-1565; HEILMANN 2017, pp. 178-179), and by VAN DE PASSE (1643, p. 19).

<sup>78</sup> On visual strategies and illustrations, see STEGEL 2009; KUSUKAWA 2012; and NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 68-71.

<sup>79</sup> «Messer Agnolo: Poi che sino a qui si è trattato tutto di cose appartenenti alla testa o capo, mi porrebbe che fusse bene trattar della mano e poi del' piede, e di poi far la mano appiccata al braccio, e parimente il piede con la sua gamba e coscia, e questi ancora in molte vedute; e di poi trattar de torsi, o inbusti che si chiamino, venendo poi al far le figure intere, dove porremo tutte le misure secondo la grandezza della testa, facendo di tutto quello chi anche no seguitando prima l'ossa, di poi l'anatomia et ultimo la pelle come ti dissi» (Manuscript D<sup>2</sup>, fol. [27v]).

<sup>80</sup> For more on the teaching of eye anatomy, see NANOBASHVILI 2018, pp. 63-66.

<sup>81</sup> The choice of subject was made specifically for the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, which explains the patron's focus on Eve. On this see LECCHINI-GIOVANNONI 1991, pp. 238-239, and FABBRI 2002, pp. 164-179.

anatomy of the head at the beginning of the second book. The interruption at this point, however, is incomprehensible and cannot be explained, as in the previous versions, with difficulties in the formulation. Remarkably, the person who later bound the manuscripts together not only carefully arranged them in the order of their creation, but also separated Manuscript D<sup>1</sup> and D<sup>2</sup>, and subsequently appended the second anatomical part to the interrupted Manuscript E<sup>82</sup>. It is possible that he did so in order to clarify Allori's intentions, at least in this specific way.

When Raffaello Borghini described the *Ragionamenti* in his *Il Riposo*, Allori's manuscript was unfinished<sup>83</sup>. In his praise, Borghini is most enthusiastic about the anatomy section, but his description corresponds specifically to the content of the most extensive version, Manuscript D<sup>2</sup>. Only in this version Allori describes, in addition to the features of the face and the sections of the skull, the anatomy of the entire body, which is highlighted by Borghini<sup>84</sup>. From Borghini's wish to see this book printed, it can be concluded that around 1584 Allori's plans were still relevant<sup>85</sup>.

About a century later, two opposite accounts of the *Ragionamenti* emerged. The detailed description of the manuscripts by Filippo Baldinucci suggests that he did not rely on Borghini's report, but saw the manuscripts in person<sup>86</sup>. In contrast, Pellegrino Orlandi affirmed that Allori's book on anatomy and the human body had gone to press in 1590<sup>87</sup>. What Orlandi based his claim on is not possible to reconstruct. However, his descriptive title gives the impression that he had heard about a planned publication or possibly read Borghini's comment, and not necessarily that he had a finished book in front of him.

Thus, we can conclude that when exactly Allori stopped working on his drawing manual and what his plans for its publication were is hard to determine. However, the analysis of all five surviving manuscripts not only makes it possible to trace the genesis of the first drawing manual, but also shows a part of Florentine history not told by Vasari<sup>88</sup>. ✂

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. supra, note 5.

<sup>83</sup> «È lo Allori molto studioso e diligente nell'arte sua et ha composto un libro in dialogo, dove mostra l'arte del disegnare le figure, cominciandosi dalle picciole particelle delle membra e venendo a poco a poco a formare tutto il corpo umano e si vedranno in disegno tutte quelle cose sopra le quali egli discorre et io ho veduto gran parte di detti disegni e mi son maravigliato di tanta diligenza, perché egli va ritrovando ogni nervo, ogni vena, ogni osso et ogni muscolo. Et ha fatto molte belle notomie in diverse attitudini e molte figure con la pelle di tutta bellezza, talché io mi fo a credere che questa sua opera, la quale egli tosto spera mandare in luce, sia per essere di gran profitto agli studiosi dell'arte e di gran piacere a' gentiluomini, che si diletmano del disegno» (BORGHINI 1584, p. 630).

<sup>84</sup> However, it is possible that the continuation of Manuscript E existed but has since been lost.

<sup>85</sup> HEIKAMP 1956, p. 38; REILLY 1999, p. 160.

<sup>86</sup> «E finalmente [Allori] diedesi a comporre un certo libro in forma di dialogo, del quale, non ha molto, vennero sotto l'occhio nostro alcuni frammenti di sua propria manoscritti, e volle in esso libro tutto pieno d'esemplari, disegnati pure di sua mano, diligentemente incominciarsi dall'occhio, e seguitarsi fino al rimanente delle parti e delle membra, prima mostrandolo in ischeletro, poi in notomia, e finalmente in carne e pelle; non sappiamo già dire, se l'opera rimanesse compita e messa, come diciamo, al pulito; giacché quel che a noi è riuscito vedere, non trascende le parti della testa con poco più ed è la prima bozza de' disegni e del dialogo antedetto, dal principio del quale pure si raccoglie quel fusse sua intenzione intorno al condurlo a sua fine» (BALDINUCCI 1681-1728, V, pp. 185-186).

<sup>87</sup> «L'anno 1590 diede alle stampe un libro, nel quale mostrò l'arte del disegnare le figure, principiando dalli muscoli, nervi, ossa, membra e corpo umano» (ORLANDI 1704, p. 66).

<sup>88</sup> Here I am building on the argument of PILLIOD (2001) that writing Florentine history from the perspective of Bronzino and Allori opens up new possibilities for rediscovering hidden and forgotten details.



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