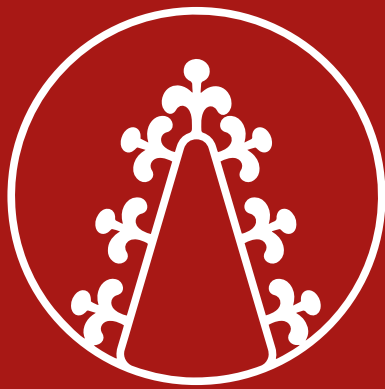


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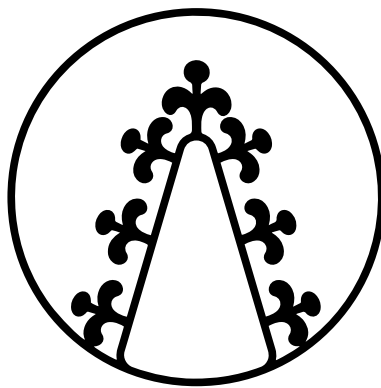
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LIDEA

Testi Fonti Lessico • Disegni

**Rivista digitale di letteratura artistica, storia della filosofia, linguistica
& di storia del disegno**

Periodico annuale (in due fascicoli)
ISSN 3035-2452 • DOI [10.69114/LIDEA/](https://doi.org/10.69114/LIDEA/)

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Francesca Ceccarelli

Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma

Via di Ripetta, 222 • 00186 Roma (RM)
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Disegni

URL <https://idea.abaroma.it/fascicoli/i-2024-2-179>

DOI [10.69114/LIDEA/2024.179](https://doi.org/10.69114/LIDEA/2024.179)

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ABSTRACT

At the end of his life, Federico Zuccaro was a world-famous artist who had worked all over Europe for kings, queens, popes, cardinals and many influential and rich patrons of the arts. He had also founded art academies and authored both memoirs and theoretical treatises. Unlike his more artistically gifted and shorter-lived brother, Taddeo, Federico left behind extensive documentation of his activities, his successes and failures. As evidenced in his drawings, this article considers the influences on Federico's artistic education, particularly those stemming from his brother's tutelage – in a formal sense – in Taddeo's atelier, where Federico was tasked with merging his art with that of his brother. This paper aims also to consider the influences of his observation of the natural world and his close study of both historical and contemporary artists, largely through his drawings. Finally, it investigates his attraction to the mechanics of social and political power and his desire to attain fame and material success in the competitive world of which he had chosen to navigate.

Alla fine della sua vita, Federico Zuccaro era un artista di fama mondiale, che aveva lavorato in tutta Europa per re, regine, papi, cardinali e per molti ricchi e influenti mecenati delle arti. Aveva anche fondato accademie d'arte e scritto memorie e trattati teorici. Diversamente dal fratello Taddeo, più dotato artisticamente e di vita più breve, Federico ha lasciato ampie prove documentarie delle sue attività, dei suoi successi e fallimenti. Come evidenziato dai disegni di Federico, questo articolo analizza le influenze sulla sua formazione artistica derivanti dalla tutela formale ricevuta nell'atelier di Taddeo, dove fu chiamato a fondere la sua arte con quella del fratello. Il contributo considera poi gli aspetti generati dalla sua osservazione del mondo naturale e dallo studio approfondito dei grandi artisti del passato e dei suoi contemporanei; infine, sempre attraverso i disegni, indaga l'attrazione di Federico per i meccanismi del potere sociale e politico e il suo desiderio di raggiungere fama e ricompense materiali nel mondo competitivo di cui scelse di far parte.

KEYWORDS Federico Zuccaro • Taddeo Zuccaro • Zuccari • drawing • artistic education • nature • knowledge • idea • theory of art • Renaissance • Italy


PAROLE CHIAVE Federico Zuccari • Taddeo Zuccari • Zuccaro • disegno • educazione artistica • natura • conoscenza • idea • teoria dell'arte • Rinascimento • Italia

CITA COME James Mundy, *Federico Zuccaro's Artistic Education as Evidenced in His Drawings*, «L'IDEA • Disegni», I.2, 2024, pp. 97-113, DOI 10.69114/LIDEA/2024.179-250

URL <https://lidea.abaroma.it/articoli/federico-zuccaros-artistic-education-as-evidenced-in-his-drawings-250>

DOI [10.69114/LIDEA/2024.179-250](https://doi.org/10.69114/LIDEA/2024.179-250)

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PEER-REVIEW

Presentato 05/07/2024

Accettato 14/08/2024

Pubblicato 05/11/2024

Federico Zuccaro's Artistic Education as Evidenced in His Drawings

✦ James Mundy

Vassar College, The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, *Director Emeritus*



Although this essay deals with his artistic education, we know little about how Federico Zuccaro received his general education. While artist/authors such as Giovanni Battista Armenini in his *De' Veri Precetti della Pittura* (Ravenna 1587) and Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo in his *Idea del Tempio della Pittura* (Milano 1590) recommend a course of learning for young artists stressing the basics of reading and writing well and familiarity with religious narratives and classical history, the reality of Federico's own biography might have limited any formal education while still living with his parents. From the age of ten he was already in the care of his brother by whom there are almost no letters or other documents in his hand, no evidence that he was well-read or interested in the advantages of being learned. Federico, on the other hand, generated a great deal of correspondence that has been preserved. We see from his sketchbooks that he associated with poets, musicians, and other gentlemen. He was a founder and member of academies and made a close study of Dante, enough to illustrate the *Divina Commedia*. At the end of his life, he published a volume on his travels and one devoted to artistic theory. We must assume that he was largely an autodidact since he seems to give no credit to others for his education.

The Early Life of Federico Zuccaro as a Draughtsman

Federico Zuccaro (1540¹-1609) appears only twice in his illustrated narrative documenting the early career of his older brother Taddeo, intended to serve as an object lesson for the young artists/apprentices residing at his grand residence atop the Pincian Hill in Rome². The first time is in the scene of his brother's departure in 1543 from their family home in San Angelo in Vado, where Federico depicted himself as little more than a toddler clinging to the skirts of his mother (Fig. 1)³. The second time is in the subsidiary moment after Taddeo's return to his parent's house suffering from fatigue and fever. There, Federico, now a few years older, is shown with other family members at his brother's bedside while he recuperates (Fig. 2)⁴. In both cameo appearances, set approximately in the years 1543-1546, Federico identifies himself with the inscription «FEDERICO» and «Federico Zuccaro».

While the entire series of drawings is a tribute to his brother's courage in the face of adversity, Federico modestly finds a place for himself on the margins of the narrative and, thus, associates himself, albeit tangentially, with the process of an artist's education. Several years later, in the Jubilee Year of 1550, Federico's parents would take him to Rome to receive his own training under the tutelage of his brother Taddeo, now twenty-one years old and already recognized as a young master.

¹ It is necessary at this point to climb gingerly into the morass surrounding the date of Federico's birth. As historians, we feel it necessary to establish such fundamental dates as this, although ultimately it bears only a little importance when interpreting the artist's work. My relegating the discussion to a footnote is an indication of the level of its importance. In his chronology of the Zuccari, Giuseppe Cucco (1993, p. 109) recounts most of the known evidence. He maintains that Federico was born «exactly on 18 April 1539». How the month and day were arrived at is unclear. The primary support for the year comes from several primary sources found toward the end of Federico's life (it is known that he died in Ancona on 6 August 1609). On 6 June 1607 he wrote to his patron, Duke Francesco Maria II della Rovere, as follows: «Cosi lo [l'ho] soplicito fauorirmi contentarsi ch'io ritorni a Roma e mia casa, si per l'età in che io mi trouo di 68 anni, bisognioso di gouerno e riposo come che diuersi miei afari mi ui richiamano, pur là potro seruirla con più quiete» («So I have simplified it to favor myself contenting myself with returning to Rome and my home, because of the age at which I find myself of 68 years in need of desire and rest, as many of my affairs remind me, although there I will be able to serve you with more quiet», see GRONAU 1936, p. 231). The next year, 1608, Federico signed and dated two paintings (mentioned by ACIDINI 1998-1999, II, pp. 263-265), the first, *The Vision of Saint Catherine de' Vigri* (now in the collection of the Cassa di Risparmio in Pesaro). Its inscription reads «FEDERICUS ZUCCARUS/ BEATAE CATHARINAE BONONIAE PINXIT/ [...] ANNO SALUTIS 1608 ET AUCTORIS ÆTAT[E] 69». The second was on a fresco now lost in the Jesuit Church of San Rocco in Parma that carried the epigram «[FEDERICUS] Z[UCCARUS] SOCIETATIS IESU DOMUS PARMENSIS/ MONUMENTUM AMORIS FACIEBAT./ ANNO D[OMINI] M.D.C.VIII. ÆT[ATIS] SUAE LXIX». Yes, as pointed out by Cucco (1993, p. 109), there are moments of inconsistency in Federico's own understanding of his age when recollecting other projects. One example is when Vasari mistakenly mentions in his *Vite* (VASARI/MILANESI 1878-1885, VII, p. 89) that Federico was twenty-eight years old when he worked on the façade of the house of Tizio da Spoleto. Federico corrected the number to «eighteen» which would have suggested a birth date of 1540/41 given the project was executed in 1559. However, the most reliable inscription listing Federico's age is found on the large *modello* for the curtain he designed as the backdrop for the performance of the comedy, *La Cofanaria*, written by Francesco d'Ambrà for the marriage of Joanna of Austria and Francesco I de' Medici. The play was performed on 26 December 1565. The inscription is found on the tree stump in the foreground and reads «FEDERICUS/ Z[UCCARUS]/ FA[CIEBAT] AS./ MDLXV/ ÆTAT[IS] SU[A]E XXV» (see ACIDINI 1998-1999, I, p. 241). Listing his age as twenty-five in late December of 1565 leaves little room for misunderstanding his birth year as anything but 1540. The chance of his being mistaken about his age at such an early stage of his life is certainly less likely than it was a year or two before his death.

² Most of the drawings for this cycle are now in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Inv. 99.GA.6.1-20: <www.getty.edu>.

³ Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. 99.GA.6.2, pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of black chalk, on tan paper, 274x260 mm.

⁴ Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. 99.GA.6.15, pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of black chalk, on tan paper, 177x423 mm.



Fig. 1 Federico Zuccaro, *Taddeo Leaving Home in Sant'Angelo in Vado Accompanied by Two Guardian Angels*, pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of black chalk, on tan paper, 1595-1600, Inv. 99.GA.6.2. © Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum



Fig. 2 Federico Zuccaro, *Taddeo Returning Home with the Sack of Stones, and in Bed Recovering from His Fever*, pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of black chalk, on tan paper, 1595-1600, Inv. 99.GA.6.15. © Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum

One can only imagine that Federico was not forced to endure the privations and personal cruelties inflicted on his brother. Further, with Taddeo receiving more and more commissions from 1550 forward, it would seem logical that the expeditious training of his young sibling was in both their interests.

The core element of training for a young artist in central Italy in the sixteenth century was drawing and especially, as illustrated in *The Early Life of Taddeo Zuccaro*, the exercise of copying the masters of sculpture and painting from Antiquity and those preceding the life of the student. Here, Federico illustrates Taddeo copying Hellenistic sculpture such as the Laocoön as well as the painted façades of Polidoro da Caravaggio and the frescoes of Raphael and Michelangelo. It should certainly be expected that Federico's early training followed a similar path, especially since he continued to sketch from the work of other artists for the rest of his life in locations as diverse as Rome, Venice, London and Spain. Yet, for those who study the drawings of the Old Masters, identifying with any conviction student work by a specific artist is both rare and uncertain. The cornerstone connection of a documented commission with its preparatory studies is normally the point of departure for the cogent assembly of an artist's graphic *oeuvre*. The drawings executed in the process of training were, furthermore, less likely to be kept for long and, thus, to survive.

Therefore, our understanding of any drawings by Federico that might survive from his earliest years of training becomes only a speculative exercise. No certain graphic work is ascertainable for Federico during the first eight or nine years of his apprenticeship with his brother Taddeo. We have no way of knowing if he was a prodigy, a gifted student draftsman or a slow learner. To build a matrix of early drawings upon which to add later, certain works connected with commissions is but to construct a house of cards. We know from Vasari that Federico assisted his brother on several Roman projects

as early as, perhaps, 1553, but certainly by 1555, by painting friezes and other decorative elements, thus he was already, by his early teens, given significant responsibility⁵. Over the following few years, he would continue to assist on palace façade decorations for the Mattei and Orsini families where, as above, we have no evidence of drawings by Federico that can relate to these projects. We come to rest on more solid ground only in the year 1559 when Federico is given his first two autonomous projects, the first a painting of *Mount Parnassus* for Stefano Margani in his house (no longer extant) at the base of stairs that rise to the church of the Aracoeli and the second, the decoration of the exterior of the Roman house of the Master of the Household of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Tizio Chermandio da Spoleto, a structure somewhat recently restored. The autonomous nature of these projects and their documentation incline one to posit connections between several depictions of Parnassus sketched by Federico but a specific relationship remains elusive. On the other hand, our first true insights into the qualitative level of the young artist's draftsmanship derive from the Tizio da Spoleto commission. The frescoes illustrated several moments from the life of saint Eustace, and the few surviving sketches for this project demonstrate that the eighteen-year-old Federico is now competent in the handling of pen, ink, chalks and watercolor. These drawings also suggest an independent artistic personality that could not be confused with that of Taddeo. However, it is with this commission that we are presented with an intriguing anecdote by Vasari. He writes that during Federico's execution of the paintings, Taddeo would, on occasion «retouch and amend» («ritoccare e racconciare») Federico's painting. After putting up with the editing for a while, Federico lost his temper, seized a hammer, and destroyed something painted by Taddeo. When things calmed down it was agreed that, in future, «Taddeo might correct or retouch the designs or cartoons of Federico at his pleasure but was not to lay

⁵ These works included paintings in the Giambeccari Palace and the Obelisk of San Mauro; see VASARI/FOSTER 1850-1852, V, pp. 186-187; VASARI/MILANESI 1878-1885, VII, pp. 82-83.



Fig. 3 Taddeo Zuccaro, *A Standing Figure in Heavy Drapery, Seen from Behind, Leaning on the Edge of a Sarcophagus*, pen and brown wash over black chalk, heightened with white, on yellow-brown prepared paper, 1566, Inv. WA1937.229. © Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford



Fig. 4 Federico Zuccaro, *Study of a Draped Man after Taddeo Zuccaro*, black chalk with touches of red chalk with some white heightening, on tan paper, 1566-1589, Inv. 9061 recto. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques/ © GrandPalaisRmn

a hand on the works which the latter was executing in oil, in fresco, or in any other manner»⁶. This brief story about the two artists has led to wider inferences on the part of some scholars that Taddeo also 'supplied' Federico with drawings for his commissions from the time of his work on the Tizio da Spoleto house until the former's death in 1566. This was done to rationalize the very high quality of some of the preparatory drawings for the frescoes in the Vatican Belvedere which Federico completed and was paid for in 1563⁷. Elsewhere, I have attempted to demonstrate the practical reasons for the questionable feasibility of this assumption, especially when one considers the high quality of certain drawings for Federico's Venetian commissions of 1563-1566, where it was impossible for Taddeo to anticipate either the

subject or format to provide such studies as he might have done with the drawings for the Vatican or, even, for Caprarola⁸.

Distinguishing Between the Drawings of the Zuccari 1559-1566

There are few more difficult tasks in the field of Old Master drawings connoisseurship than understanding which Zuccaro brother was responsible for certain drawings between the year 1559, when Federico received his first autonomous projects, and 1566 when Taddeo's artistic activity, and life, ceased, in other terms, when Federico was between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six. John Gere, one of the most perspicacious and knowledgeable experts in the field of

⁶ VASARI/FOSTER 1850-1852, V, pp. 192-193; VASARI/MILANESI 1878-1885, VII, pp. 89-90: «che Taddeo potesse correggere e mettere mano nei disegni e cartoni di Federigo a suo piacimento; ma non mai nell' opera che facesse o a fresco o a olio o in altro modo». Milanese further mentions in a footnote that Federico corrected this passage in his volume of Vasari's *Vite* to read that he destroyed a portion of the painting that Taddeo had retouched. He also changed «Taddeo might correct» to read «he corrected».

⁷ In his article in «Master Drawings» of 1995 GERE re-assigned three drawings for the Belvedere (Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Inv. 834 S and Inv. 13166 F; Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet, Inv. NG.K&H.B. 15601 verso) from Federico to Taddeo based on «general probability and quality». He cited as support the record of the payment to Federico of October 1563 «per residuo di più lavori di pittura e stucco in diversi luoghi a Belvedere e per detto Federigo a Taddeo Zucchero suo Fratello». There are different ways Taddeo might have been useful in the execution of the Vatican commission to receive a portion of this payment and, since the document is not specific in this regard, we cannot simply assume, as GERE (*ibid.*) has done, that it must indicate providing Federico with drawings, a collaborative gesture that, between brothers, need not be documented.

⁸ MUNDY 2005, especially pp. 160-161 and pp. 172-177.



Figs. 5-6 (left) Federico Zuccaro, *Saint Peter*, pen and brown ink with brown wash over red and black chalks, on blue prepared paper, before 1564, Inv. Z 01374 recto; (right) Taddeo Zuccaro, *Two Standing Soldiers*, black chalk on blue prepared paper, before 1564, Inv. Z 01374 verso © Köln, Wallraf-Richartz Museum



Fig. 7 Taddeo Zuccaro (?), *Musical Angels*, pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, on tan paper, 1562-1563, Inv. NG.K&H.B. 15601 *recto*. © Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet

sixteenth-century Central Italian drawings, did the most to try and separate the work of the two brothers *via* exhibitions of their drawings in the collections of the Uffizi and the Louvre in 1966 and 1969 respectively as well as in his monograph on Taddeo's graphic work also published in 1969⁹. In large part, underlying his work was a kind of binary prejudice rooted in the worldview of 'good' equaling the drawings of Taddeo and those of Federico representing those of a lower qualitative order. Given that the two brothers worked very closely together and the levels of quality of their work can be much more nuanced and can vary from day to day, this approach appeared to me, when viewing all the drawings given to the two brothers, unnecessarily dogmatic¹⁰. As mentioned above, the proof of Federico's abilities to absorb and reflect the style *and* quality of Taddeo's work can be found in his drawings for the various Venetian commissions of the early 1560s.

We are occasionally helped in the separation of the two artists' works by an inscription in Federico's hand such as that found on the Ashmolean's Museum's *Study of a Draped Man Seen from Behind*, a preparatory sketch for one of the Apostles in *The Assumption of the Virgin* for the Pucci Chapel (**Fig. 3**). Here he identifies it as the last drawing by his brother and adds the date 1566¹¹. Such an inscription, made on a drawing executed at the very end of Taddeo's career can serve as an important point of reference for our decision-making regarding the authorship of other drawings. When the Ashmolean sheet is compared to that in the Louvre (**Fig. 4**)¹², universally given to Federico, one could understand, were the inscription not present, that both studies would be attributed to the same artist, their qualitative differences not being overly clear.

An intriguing and at the same time puzzling condition occurs with several drawings where we might be looking at the hands of both brothers on a single sheet, one on the *recto* and the other on

⁹ GERE 1966b, 1969a and 1969b. Another part of this effort was his two-part article in «The Burlington Magazine» (GERE 1966a), on the Pucci Chapel and the altarpiece for the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso. When I visited him in 1985 to receive his blessing on embarking on a catalogue of Federico's drawings, he remarked memorably that his interest in Federico's work went only insofar as it could be distinguished from Taddeo's.

¹⁰ Gere's overall perspective was illustrated in a letter of 30 March 1989 where he wrote, regarding a work to be included in the 1989 Milwaukee exhibition: «Mr. Katalan's *Assumption*. I find this very puzzling, too. I can't whole-heartedly accept it as Taddeo, though it has many Taddesque features. I suppose it must be by Federico» (emphasis mine).

¹¹ Inv. WA1937.229, pen and brown wash over black chalk, heightened with white, on light yellow prepared paper, 378x262 mm; *recto* inscribed at lower right by Federico «l'ultimo disegno di ma[n]o d[e]lla B[e]ata/ Anima di mio fratello Tadeo BM/ l'Jan[n]o 1566»; see MUNDY 2005, p. 168.

¹² Inv. 9061 *recto*, black chalk with touches of red chalk with some white heightening, on tan paper, 407x263 mm.

the *verso*. In three instances, we are presented with a drawing connected to a work executed by Federico on one side of the paper and a drawing on the other side seemingly by Taddeo based on style but not connected to a specific commission. The first is the ink drawing over red and black chalk of Saint Peter in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne (Fig. 5), a preliminary sketch for the altarpiece of *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* in the Farratino Chapel in the Cathedral at Amelia¹³. The project, executed between 1559-1564 was one where Federico was still under the strong influence of his brother's style, yet this drawing has little to suggest that it is Taddeo's work. However, the *verso*, depicting in black chalk a pair of soldiers, is completely tenable as a drawing by the elder Zuccaro (Fig. 6)¹⁴.

The second drawing is the *Group of Angels* in Oslo Nasjonalgalleriet¹⁵ (Fig. 7), a drawing in pen and ink with wash over black chalk. The execution of the angels' faces, hair and garments on the *recto* might be attributable with good cause to the hand of Taddeo and it was accepted as such by John Gere in 1995. However, on the drawing's *verso* is a heavily worked up black chalk study for *The Plague of the Flies* in the Vatican (Fig. 8), a fresco that has traditionally be given to Federico, although Gere thought better of his attribution of the painting's preliminary studies to Federico and reassigned them to Taddeo based on the wording of a payment document for the Belvedere paintings of 1563 that mentions both brothers but does not indicate the role of either in the work¹⁶. The various studies for the Vatican Belvedere should be understood as not unlikely work for the twenty-three-year-old Federico given his extensive experience by this time; and the *verso* of the Oslo drawing, connected as it is to the project is not unique in having a sketch likely by Taddeo on its obverse. A somewhat complex allegorical theme that depicts God the Father with his hands on the shoulders of Adam and Eve is depicted on the *recto* of a drawing in the Biblioteca Reale in Turin¹⁷ (Fig. 9). In front of them is the dead figure of Christ tended by three angels. The somewhat spasmodic line found, for example, defining the figure of God and the facial types likely signify the hand of



Fig. 8 Federico Zuccaro, *Study for the Plague of the Flies*, black chalk on tan paper, 1562-1563, Inv. NG.K&H.B. 15601 *verso*. © Oslo, Nasjonalgalleriet

Taddeo. However, on the *verso* is an equally energetic preliminary pen-and-ink-with-wash study for one of the groups of bystanders in Federico's fresco of *The Raising of Lazarus* in the Grimani Chapel in Venice (Fig. 10). One could only accept this drawing as the work of Taddeo if one also accepted the premise that he sent Federico

¹³ The painting is discussed in ACIDINI 1998-1999, I, p. 109.

¹⁴ Inv. Z 01374, pen and brown ink with brown wash over red and black chalks (*recto*), black chalk (*verso*), on blue prepared paper, 262x113 mm.

¹⁵ Inv. NG.K&H.B. 15601, pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk (*recto*), black chalk (*verso*), on tan paper, 253x383 mm.

¹⁶ GERE 1995, p. 239.

¹⁷ Inv. D.C. 15849, (*recto*) pen and brown ink with brown wash heightened with white, (*verso*) pen and brown ink over traces of red chalk, on blue prepared paper, 338x258 mm. Entitled by the Turin Library, *An Allegory of Redemption*, it is an altogether unusual one for Taddeo, especially as a seemingly stand-alone composition. It would appear to be an assigned subject from an iconographical advisor.



Fig. 9 Federico Zuccaro, *Allegory of Redemption, God the Father Raising Adam and Eve, and the Dead Christ*, pen and brown ink with brown wash heightened with white, on blue prepared paper, 1563, Inv. D.C. 15849 recto. © Torino, Biblioteca Reale

to Venice equipped with ideas of this sort for subjects yet to be determined. Taddeo's involvement in such projects at long distance seems doubtful but the spirit and *brio* of this sketch, let alone the quality, are equal to the older brother's work. I feel the best arguments for accepting (reluctantly in the case of some scholars) Federico's significant attainments as an artist by this time are demonstrated by these three sheets¹⁸. Needless to mention, the fact that he received such commissions as those from the Grimani by his early-to-mid-twenties should already be proof of his stature as an artist in the eyes of prospective clients.

Gere's view of Federico as «little more than an extension of Taddeo's personality» is to a degree true but his ability to blend his style with that of such a prodigious genius as his brother, especially in the works in Rome and elsewhere that he completed for Taddeo, was no mean accomplishment¹⁹. His surviving drawings for the Pucci Chapel frescoes are one testament to the difficulty of separating the work of the two brothers. If he were only the artistic amanuensis of Taddeo the task of discernment would be much easier. The fact that he was not, is further proof of his early attainments²⁰. Also, regarding the blending of styles between the artists, the rooms at Caprarola, all maintain a qualitative consistency that extends beyond the work of a faithful stylistic follower. This is true of those rooms where he collaborated with Taddeo while the latter was still alive, such as the *Camera dell'Aurora*, and where he worked after Taddeo's death and until his own dismissal in June 1569, such as the Villa's chapel. Were Federico not so impetuous in his criticism of the Farnese's close management of the project that resulted in the Cardinal's wrath and Federico's sacking, he might have easily brought the project to a successful and seamless conclusion. The surviving drawings for late stages of the decoration clearly demonstrate his talent at depicting a complicated sequential narrative, for example in the *Sala di Ercole* where his studies promised more dynamic storytelling than was ultimately achieved by his successor, Jacopo Bertioia.

Federico Zuccaro and Nature

Throughout his career, Federico Zuccaro remained an inveterate sketcher of the world around him whether the subject was animal, vegetable, or mineral. Such studies were almost always executed in chalk, most often the red and black chalk technique that would be often imitated by his peers and followers, thereby making the attribution of such studies an all-consuming ordering of a tangled mess²¹. What appears to be a natural curiosity about the nature of things, unlike the somewhat mono-dimensional focus on artistic invention exhibited by his brother, was enhanced by his extensive



Fig. 10 Federico Zuccaro, *Study of Onlookers for the Raising of Lazarus*, pen and brown ink over traces of red chalk, on faded blue prepared paper, 1563, Inv. D.C. 15849 verso. © Torino, Biblioteca Reale

travels. His attention could be attracted by the candid poses of friends and family occupied with a task such as playing a musical instrument or, even the appeal of a figure at rest. His portraits and more informal studies of the inhabitants of the Vallombrosa abbey are testaments to his interest in capturing character as well as superficial appearance. These sketches sometimes carry inscriptions documenting the sitter's name and age, hair or skin color, and salient details of costume. He was equally interested in recording the appearance of exotic visitors such as Turks in Venice or Japanese emissaries in Rome. He took time to record repeatedly the attitudes and behavior of several breeds of dogs and many of his religious paintings include canine representation. Also, he was interested in less common animals seen during his travels such as dromedaries, such as lions, raptors such as falcons, goats, deer and, even, crayfish. In this regard, his wide-ranging

¹⁸ The only reasonable counterargument for drawings such as the one in Turin being completely by Taddeo would be that Federico left for Venice with a portfolio of assorted drawings by Taddeo and found ways to include them or build on their conceptions as he worked out some of the Venetian commissions.

¹⁹ GERE 1966a, p. 289.

²⁰ In a «Master Drawings» article (MUNDY 2005, p. 183, note 2), I suggested that some of the inclination of scholars to harbor a prejudice regarding Federico's accomplishments lies, in part, in the extensive anecdotal evidence as well as the primary evidence he left behind where he often comes off as cranky and petulant. In his own words, as much as in the reports of others, Federico comes across as self-aggrandizing, often petty and, too often, his own worst enemy. His somewhat unreasonable competitive *animus* against Vasari, the epitome of the accomplished artist/gentleman, was for many contemporaries and later writers, reason enough to withhold the benefit of the doubt when Federico's behavior is measured against his achievements. Taddeo by way of contrast left almost no first-hand documentary evidence, thus we have no clear autobiographical footprint from which to work. What we do know about him as an individual is a result of Federico's and Vasari's interpretations, complete with any prejudices they might have had.

²¹ The enormity of portrait drawings alone held in public collections and classified as the work of Federico cannot be overestimated and the cataloguing of so many would be a waste of time on a grand scale. The truth is that the qualitative level of such studies can be so low that museums, auction houses and other arbiters of classification do the world no service at all by expanding the pool of 'Zuccaros' without applying greater rigor to the process.

interest in the appearance and movement of living things both familiar and exotic are closer to those of the German Albrecht Dürer than to his Italian contemporaries²². Cityscapes were of interest to him and were occasionally used as points of departure for the urban locations of some of his religious as well as secular paintings. We have evidence of his recording various locations in Rome and Florence as well as glimpses of other cities encountered in his travels. Surviving sketches record his interest in buildings and vistas in and around Orvieto, Cividale, Cittadella, Udine and, even perhaps, Barcelona. One can imagine sketchbooks now lost that recorded more of his impressions of Spain, the Lowlands and England. While Federico was not a landscape painter and landscapes normally serve as a secondary element in his narrative and allegorical works, he was, as far as his sketchbooks indicate, attentive to the specifics of how trees, rocks, meadows, streams and rivers appear and, thus, how to depict them. He was also able to intuit the mood of a natural setting and render it according to its airiness, melancholy or, even, menace, as seen for example in many of his illustrations to Dante's *Divina Commedia*²³.

Federico Zuccaro and Other Artists

A concomitant interest of Zuccaro's to recording the world at large in his drawings was his interest in rendering the appearance of paintings and sculpture by artists of previous generations as well as those of his contemporaries. This interest transcended the conventional workshop practice of having apprentices copy the great works of art in places like Rome and Florence as depicted in *The Early Life of Taddeo Zuccaro*. Throughout his youth, maturity and even final years, Federico was inclined to make sketches of the work of many of the great masters of Italian art, from Raphael to Michelangelo to Correggio. His copies after the Flemish miniaturists responsible for the illustrations in the Grimani Breviary from the early 1500s display his willingness to learn from Northern European masters as well. They also form part of a program undertaken by the then youthful artist of digesting the best aspects of Venetian visual culture together with his sketches after the great works by Giorgione, Titian and Veronese. One needs to remember that the voyage to Venice was the first time that Federico was on his own, free from the shadow of his brother's achievements. The excitement of feeling, really for the first time, like an independent master with an important patron in the Grimani family can only be imagined. This sudden elevation in status coupled with what must have been the exotic bustle and collision of cultures found in *La Serenissima* made Federico especially hungry to absorb the great work found in the city. This critical moment of professional recognition would also spell the beginning of Federico's gradual but steady ascent of the mountain of self-regard, a journey that would be fraught with worldly success peppered with frustration and occasional public failure and humiliation.

Federico's second period in Florence from 1575 to 1579 yielded opportunities to make multiple copies of the work of Andrea del Sarto as well as the sculpture of Michelangelo and Giambologna.



Fig. 11 Federico Zuccaro, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, red and black chalk, on tan paper, 1575, Inv. Gg,1.418. © London, The Trustees of the British Museum

During this period, Federico copied the work of lesser artists including the sculpted image of the court dwarf Morgante riding a tortoise by Domenico Cioli and even, on at least a pair of occasions, the work of the Quattrocento painter Giovanni di ser Giovanni, the brother of Masaccio. Despite his reflexive antipathy to Giorgio Vasari, Federico copied a motif from his paintings in Palazzo Vecchio on at least one occasion as evidenced by a small sheet in the Hermitage²⁴.

In addition to the many full compositions he copied, Federico would also focus on a specific figure or set of figures within a larger composition. He did this with the artists he seemed to respect the most, seeking inspiration in the micro as well as the macro aspects of the work. Thus, he could appreciate the presentation of the horrors of *The Last Judgment* in their specifics by copying isolated figures by Signorelli or Michelangelo. The illusionistic fun house of frescoes in Giulio Romano's decorative scheme for the Palazzo Te in Mantua was a perfect landscape of broad and specific motives

²² LORENZONI 2015 (pp. 106-117), and 2016 has focused attention on the importance of Federico's omnivorous sketching of the natural world during his travels. This is also true of his sketches after the work of other artists.

²³ Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe, Inv. 3474-3561.

²⁴ Inv. 6514, *Figures from the Procession of Leo X in the Sala di Leo X in Palazzo Vecchio* (after Giorgio Vasari), 115x130 mm.

to be studied and copied. Correggio, a special favorite of the artist, was copied extensively, Federico often sketching full altarpieces as well as elements from his more comprehensive work such as the cupola of the Cathedral at Parma. The recent rediscovery of a series of full studies after the master has expanded our understanding of Federico's mimetic process²⁵. While we know of only one work that we assume he copied while in Spain, that of Titian's *Adoration of the Magi*, it is logical to assume that there are others still at-large or lost²⁶. Equally so, his travels to Northern Europe in the mid-1570s must have offered multiple opportunities to copy work in France, the Low Countries and England, although just a few surviving sheets demonstrate the range of works found in those lands²⁷.

Finally, there are the over twenty sketches after portraits of famous men assembled by the humanist Paolo Giovio for his gallery in Como. Federico, in all probability, did not copy those portraits although his travels to Northern Italy later in his life might have offered that opportunity. Rather, it was more likely that he made his drawn copies, some complete with color notes, from the 240 of 280 painted replicas by the Florentine artist Cristofano dell'Altissimo commissioned by Cosimo I de' Medici. These copies were available to Federico while he was in Florence in the 1570s. The purpose of these copies indicated Federico's own humanist aspirations and a fascination with fame and the historically famous, tangible evidence of the artist's own striving to establish himself as a man of mark in the world²⁸.

The Artist, Politics and Power

Thanks to his brother's reputation, established well before Federico arrived in Rome, the younger artist was reared in an atmosphere of work involving commissions from the most financially and politically powerful figures in the city. Most important to Federico's early success was the established relationship between his brother and the Farnese family. Federico would benefit from this patronage for several years and even after his sudden and somewhat acrimonious sacking from the completion of the work at Caprarola in 1569, he still seemed to maintain a mutually respectful relationship with the Farnese²⁹. Further, again thanks to his brother's connections and Taddeo's and Federico's mutual birthplace in the Marches, he enjoyed the benefit of the doubt when it came to the support of Francesco Maria II della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, with whom he enjoyed an ongoing cordial professional relationship between 1574 and Federico's death in 1609. This included direct artistic patronage, for example his decorations for the della Rovere family chapel in the Loretan Basilica of the Santa Casa. Federico was also beholden to the Duke for his intercession with Pope Gregory XIII that allowed the artist to return to Rome from exile in 1583 and complete the decorations for the Pauline Chapel in the Vatican.



Fig. 12 Federico Zuccaro, *Queen Elizabeth I*, red and black chalk, on tan paper, 1575, Inv. Gg.1.417. © London, The Trustees of the British Museum

Federico's willingness to venture far from the comfort of familiar surroundings in Rome or the Marches is demonstrated by his effective efforts at winning, as still a young man, important commissions from the Grimani family in Venice. It was also his introduction to the, at times, stiff resistance displayed by local artists to the perceived interloper. Yet Venice was by comparison to some of his other ports of call more cosmopolitan and accepting of the foreigner. He certainly experienced an underdog status at times when public competitions seemed to favor Venetian artists, yet his accomplishments in Venice during the 1560s and 1580s were steps on the way to a truly international reputation. In 1574, when he left Italy for Northern Europe, it was with the same determination to work for the most prestigious of patrons. Armed with a letter of introduction from the, by then, trusted courtier, Chiappino Vitelli, Marquess of Cetona to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and Elizabeth I's consort (Figs. 11-12),

²⁵ Of the ten drawings, once in the possession of Everhard Jabach, that re-emerged on the art market in 2003, eight of them were after Correggio. They are listed in PY 2007, pp. 14-19 and fully illustrated in BARONI 2004, nos. 1-10.

²⁶ This drawing, last seen on the French art market in 1997, is a copy of a work by Titian that also exists in painted replicas in such places as Milan and Cleveland, thus we cannot be certain that Federico drew from the prototype that was sent to Phillip II of Spain by Titian in 1559-1560.

²⁷ These include a tapestry cartoon by Raphael and several drawings after Hans Holbein.

²⁸ See MUNDY 2015, pp. 95-106, for more on some of the Giovio copies as well as LORENZONI 2021, pp. 88-95.

²⁹ This is demonstrated by, among other communications, his letter to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese from the Escorial in October 1587 where he recounts how well Phillip II was treating him and how he would visit his rooms in the palace and watch him paint while discussing Italian culture. He even includes the fact that while discussing Italian architecture, Federico made it a point «to cite your most beautiful building at Caprarola» (MULCAHY 1987, p. 504).



Fig. 13 Federico Zuccaro, *Federico Zuccaro and his wife Francesca Genga* (detail), fresco, c. 1593-1598; Rome, Casa Zuccari, Sala terrena. © Roma, Bibliotheca Hertziana

Federico found work painting both their portraits, large paintings lost to us but the essence of which survives in drawings³⁰.

Then, with such impressive credentials on his résumé, Federico was able to return to Italy at an age just slightly younger than his brother's when he died and with a new confidence as not only a painter of significant international reputation but also as a gentleman of the world with a social status never attained (and probably never desired) by Taddeo. It is possible that it was this altered self-image which allowed Federico to take the openly critical liberties regarding his Bolognese detractors, and by extension the Bolognese Gregory XIII, in the *Porta Virtutis* affair in 1581 that resulted in his banishment from Rome for two years.

Prior to his difficulties in Rome, Federico also felt the sting of professional jealousy during his period in Florence between 1575-1579 while completing the frescoes for the cupola of the city's Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, left by Vasari at his death. His sense of competition with the famous Florentine painter and possibly a slight feeling of inferiority as he took on this very important job was further enhanced by the cadre of local artists and public figures loyal to Vasari who responded

to his efforts with various anonymous sonnets and madrigals critical of the project³¹. Thus began, according to Acidini, Federico's «persecution complex» and two decades of bold allegorical imagery portraying the ongoing conflict of virtue against vice, calumny and ignorance³². That complex could only have been exacerbated after Federico moved to Spain to work for Phillip II at the Escorial at the end of 1585, the culmination of negotiations between the artist and the Royal Spanish court that began just after Zuccaro completed the frescoed *Last Judgment* for the Florentine Cathedral. His arrival at the Escorial was accompanied by high expectations and initial deference from the monarch that included excellent accommodations and treatment at the palace of the Queen where he was regularly visited by Phillip and members of his family who would watch him paint and converse on various topics³³. However, Federico's pleasure at receiving the King's attention was short-lived and several of his efforts displeased Phillip II to such an extent that he had them removed or repainted after the artist's departure from Spain in 1588. Nonetheless, in two portrayals of the artist - one a self-portrait on the walls of the Palazzo Zuccaro (**Fig. 13**) and the other a formal portrait of the artist executed by Fede Galizia in 1604 and now in the Uffizi (**Fig. 14**), he proudly wears the gold chains and portrait medal of the Spanish King bestowed on him while at the Escorial.

In the Galizia portrait he also carries around his neck a medal of another patron, Archbishop Federico Borromeo, clearly demonstrating his complete absorption of the knowledge and trappings of power. These visual cues and poses overcame the extremely vexed relationships he experienced with the ecclesiastical and temporal elites during his lifetime. They also undoubtedly served to cancel, or at least ameliorate, whatever remained of the feelings of persecution that led him to impulsive thoughts and deeds earlier in his career.

Federico Zuccaro and Knowledge³⁴

Federico Zuccaro's ambitions were not limited to gaining artistic commissions and the worldly possessions and fame that might derive from success in his chosen vocation. Part of his desire to convey to society his worldliness was couched in the conspicuous presentation of his erudition and intellectual breadth. His collaboration with some of the great Humanist scholars of the era - Annibale Caro and his complex iconographical program for the Farnese Villa at Caprarola or the multilayered iconography of the cupola of the Florentine Cathedral conceived by Vincenzo Borghini - not only required

³⁰ London, The British Museum, Inv. Gg.1.417, red and black chalk, on tan paper, 307x222 mm, and Inv. Gg.1.418, red and black chalk, on tan paper, 324x219 mm. Vitelli was given the responsibility in 1569 of negotiating a peace accord between Spain and England following an open rebellion by Protestants in the Netherlands against their Spanish occupiers, but soon thereafter was implicated in an assassination plot against Elizabeth I. By 1574, though, he seems to have recouped some trust with Dudley. For the best summary of the history of these portraits, see GOLDRING 2005, pp. 654-660.

³¹ See ACIDINI 1998-1999, II, pp. 97-103.

³² *Ibid.*, II, pp. 2-3.

³³ MULCAHY 1987, p. 504 as cited in two letters, one to an unspecified friend dated May 1586 and the other the aforementioned letter (see note 29 above) to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese of October 1587.

³⁴ While some young artists were able to attend school, it must be assumed that Federico was without much formal education given his removal to Rome and his brother's studio in 1550 at the age of ten. He might have received his basic lessons in reading and writing up until that time. His later correspondence and inscriptions on drawings indicate a cogent penmanship and a grasp of spelling with the occasional variation on a word or phrase. LEVY (1984, p. 21) cites Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's lament in *Idea del Tempio della Pittura* (Milano 1590) regarding the extent of illiteracy among the artists of his time.



Fig. 14 Fedede Galizia, *Federico Zuccaro*, oil on canvas, Inv. 1690, 1604. © Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi



Fig. 15 Federico Zuccaro, *Roman Soldiers with Prisoners*, pen and brown ink with brown wash, heightened with white on greenish-brown paper, 1550s. Inv. KdZ 18486 © Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett

the artist to absorb the relationship of text and image as it related to both ancient history and mythology as well as religious doctrine, but it also certainly encouraged his own experimentation with symbolic imagery. His early study of the painted façades of Roman palaces and his collaboration with his brother on such projects took him deeply into the often-arcane episodes of the Empire's histories. Some of his own

drawings of such moments, such as those from the 1560s in Berlin³⁵ (**Fig. 15**) and Oxford³⁶ (**Fig. 16**), taken out of a narrative sequential context, defy easy identification.

His involvement in Taddeo's conception and execution for the large maiolica dining service sent by the Duke of Urbino to the King of Spain acquainted him with many of the famous as well as more quotidian moments from the life of Julius Caesar. The

³⁵ Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. KdZ 18486, pen and brown ink with brown wash, heightened with white on greenish-brown paper, 235x246 mm.

³⁶ Ashmolean Museum, Inv. WA 1945.116 *recto*, pen and brown ink with gray wash heightened with white, on blue paper, 253x334 mm.



Fig. 16 Federico Zuccaro, *Scene from Classical History*, pen and brown ink with gray wash heightened with white, on blue paper, 1550s, Inv. WA 1945.116 recto. © Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

1560s also allowed Federico to expand his knowledge of classical mythology by participating in the decoration of private residences in and around Rome. During these years, he became conversant with the lives and loves of the gods and was called upon to imagine Parnassus or Olympus and their many inhabitants.

One of Federico's favorite vehicles was allegory, and he often chose it as a way of conveying personal messages regarding his own fortunes and feelings. While there are some drawings from the 1560s depicting allegories, the artist found wider use for coded messages regarding his own mistreatment at the hands of patrons and critics in 1569 after his dismissal from the Caprarola project³⁷. His pique at that time was expressed in the drawings for the engraving of the *Allegory of Calumny*, a creative condemnation of his treatment couched in references to classical literature. It amounted to a broadside laced with venom and directed at those who would deliberately defame an artist who only sought to travel the moral highroad of enlightenment. Later, in 1575-1579 while in

Florence, the artist had to navigate the pettiness of the Florentine art establishment while working on the completion of Vasari's work on the Duomo frescoes. His resentment took allegorical form this time in the fresco he painted on the ground floor of his Florentine residence, a house that once belonged to Andrea del Sarto. The subject was *Truth Revealed by Time* and served not only as a reminder to the artist to endure the slander of the ignorant critics, but also as an object lesson to his young apprentices and assistants. Also, as part of the decorations of his Florentine home, Federico included faux-gilt painted medallions with scenes from the life of Aesop. While they were subsidiary decorative elements of the archivolts in the *Sala Terrena*, the artist chose moments from the life of the clever slave in part because it was believed that Aesop was repeatedly the victim of slander and calumny yet turned the tables on his detractors thanks to his quick wit.

Federico's inclination to resort to private or public allegorical displays when his pride was injured reached its height on 18

³⁷ One such early and peculiar allegory is that on loan to the Harvard Art Museums (Inv. 71.1986), and thought to depict Sloth illustrated in MUNDY 1989 (pp. 150-151, no. 43).

October 1581, the feast day of Saint Luke, the patron saint of artists, when he had installed above the doorway of the church of San Luca a Monte in Rome a painting known as the *Porta Virtutis*, based on his design³⁸ (Fig. 17) but executed by his assistant Domenico Passignano. The work was yet another complex allegory attacking his artistic detractors. This time, however, it was directed at a group of Bolognese artists and clerics who Federico felt had conspired to slander his submission for an altarpiece for the church of Santa Maria del Baraccano in Bologna. A libel lawsuit was brought against the artist and, in part thanks to a detailed descriptive explanation of the meaning of the allegory written by Federico, he was convicted and banished from the papal states by Pope Gregory XIII³⁹. For the following quarter of a century, beginning with his stint in Spain, Federico moved away from his penchant to deliver his message via the intermediary of allegory and focused on a more simple and direct method that, for the most part, dealt with religious imagery in the simple and less ambiguous manner prescribed by the dictates of the Council of Trent⁴⁰. The one exception to this rule was the concept for decorating his own palace on the Pincian Hill beginning in the early 1590s, where allegory was again introduced to aid in the telling of the Zuccaro family history and to serve as a didactic tool in educating the young artists who were invited to lodge at the palace.

The artist's final and peripatetic years were spent traveling through Italy and painting commissions from Rome to Turin to the Marches. Most of these works were of religious or ecclesiastical history. It was also the time when Federico added the finishing touches to his self-perception as both an artist/gentleman and a famous intellect by writing about his travels as a kind of autobiography, but more importantly recording his thoughts on artistic theory, the former his *Passaggio per l'Italia con la Dimora di Parma* of 1608 and the latter his *L'Idée de' Pittori, Scultori et Architetti* of 1607, the first theoretical treatise on drawing and draftsmanship



Fig. 17 Federico Zuccaro, *Porta Virtutis*, pen and brown ink, brown wash with white heightening, squared in red chalk, on tan paper, 1581, Inv. 0213. © Oxford, Christ Church/ By permission of the Governing Body of Christ Church

on Early Modern Europe. With his arrival as a theorist and literary figure, his life-long transformation from artisan to grand gentleman was completed. His death in 1609 in Ancona, far away from home was curiously timely following as it did his literary *summa*. While his career was occasionally storm-tossed, it adhered to a plan to seek out the most powerful patrons and to become arguably, if not the most gifted artist draftsman of his generation, then the most famous. ✚

³⁸ Oxford, Christ Church, Inv. 0213, pen and brown ink, brown wash with white heightening, squared in red chalk, on tan paper, 378x276 mm.

³⁹ The entire process is best summarized by CAVAZZINI 2022.

⁴⁰ Federico had this message pressed upon him, according to the chronicler Fray José de Sigüenza, when after he executed paintings for Phillip II at the Escorial, the King objected to narrative liberties the artist took with standard religious iconography such as outfitting one of the shepherds at the *Nativity* with a large basket of eggs, an accessory that was thought not to be in keeping with the narrative. See GAMPP 2000, pp. 118-124, for a summary of the controversy.

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