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**ALESSANDRO CONTINI BONACOSSI, *ANTIQUARIO***

**(1878-1955)**

**THE ART MARKET AND CULTURAL PHILANTHROPY IN THE  
FORMATION OF AMERICAN MUSEUMS**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

**History of Art**

**The University of Edinburgh**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own. All published and unpublished material consulted, quoted, paraphrased, translated or transcribed in the writing of this thesis is acknowledged and properly cited throughout. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Fulvia Zaninelli.

Signed

Date. 20 July 2018





## Abstract

This thesis aims to document and discuss the role and legacy of the Italian *antiquario* Alessandro Contini Bonacossi (1878-1955) in the international secondary art market for Old Master paintings during the first half of the twentieth century. Grounded in the discovery of primary archival evidence and set against the major historical events that unfolded during his lifetime, this work presents its findings by following a research process adopted to answer the following research questions: who was Contini Bonacossi, what was his business network (where was he buying paintings, at what prices, and who were his clients), what was his *modus operandi* for selling and marketing his work, and what is his legacy. To answer these questions, I made extensive use of primary sources, the vast majority of which are unpublished or have never been used before in this context, framed by a contextualized analysis of their historical background. The archival investigation has brought to light, for the first time, documentary evidence of Contini Bonacossi's transactions and business ties with other European dealers such as Duveen Brothers, Heinemann Galleries, Colin Agnew, Colnaghi, Böhler, Steinmeyer, and Kleinberger Galleries; with scholars such as Wilhelm von Bode, Roberto Longhi, and Bernard Berenson; as well as previously unknown connections Contini Bonacossi had with members of the Harvard museum community and the Boston cultural elite such as Paul Sachs (1878-1965), Edward W. Forbes (1873-1969) Denmann Ross (1853-1935); and offers new details regarding his relationship with the Kress Brothers, their gifts of artworks to the new National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and the Kress Foundation's Regional Program that endowed museums across the US. Ultimately, this work adds to our knowledge important sources for the study of the history of private and public collecting during its crucial years in the formation of American museums. More broadly, in documenting Contini Bonacossi's case, this study strives to rethink the role of art dealers, to look at them not solely as market professionals engaged in the dynamics of supply, demand and profit, but first and foremost as bearers and sellers of culture, whose activities were fully embedded in the socio-political environment of their time and so to acknowledge and extend knowledge about their active role in the international dissemination and interpretation of cultural heritage.



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Figure 104. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Second Floor, Lombard painters. This photos was certainly taken before March 1941, as the painting by Giolfino, *Lucretia* (fig.63 ); was sold to Samuel Henry Kress on 13 March 1941. On the left side of the Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Birth of the Virgin*,(fig. 75); two panels by Boccaccio Boccaccino, *Saint Matthew and Saint John the Evangelist*, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 13; 14.

Figure 105. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Cimabue Room. Maestro della Cappella Velluti (ex Cimabue) *Madonna col Bambino in trono, due angeli e i*

*santi Francesco e Domenico, Andrea del Castagno Madonna in trono col Bambino, i santi Giovanni battista e Girolamo, angeli e due fanciulli della famiglia Pazzi Castagno* (fig 132 ) on the left. The small panel is Paolo Veneziano, *Nascita di san Nicola*. All the works are now at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi collection, n. 32.2; 7.

Figure 106. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Second Floor. This photograph was taken before 1942, as the panel on the far left near the door by Masolino da Panicale, *Madonna of Humility* (tempera on panel Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, n. 9962), was bought through Bellesi in 1930 and then sold to Goering in 1942. Other works: Agnolo Gaddi, *Madonna col Bambino e dieci angeli tra i santi Benedetto, Pietro, Giovanni Battista e Miniato*, tempera and gold on panel, cm 222 x 300 Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 29; Carlo Crivelli, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, oil on panel, 151.8x49.8cm, Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; , Giovanni del Biondo, *Saint John the Baptist and Stories of his life*, Tempera and gold on panel, cm 275 x 180, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.27.

Figure 107. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence, foyer.

Figure 108. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Bartolomeo Vivarini, *Politych with Saint James Major, Madonna and Child and Saints*, tempera and gold on panel, 280x 214.9, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, 71.PB.30, and the *Annunciation* by Domenico Morone (fig. 64 ).

Figure 109. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence.

Figure 110. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence.

Figure 111. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence, prior to 1941. On the left: Bernardino Licinio, *Reclining Nude* (sold to Goering in 1941) Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, inv. 1890, inv. 9943; Paolo Veronese, *Saint Lucy with a a Donor*, (fig. 143), Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *The Flute Player*, oil on canvas, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, Brescia; Paolo Veronese, *Portrait of Count della Porta and his son Adrian* (fig.26).

Figure 112. Jacometto Veneziano, *Ritratto di Giovane*, oil on canvas, 30x20, (Sotheby's Milan sale 9 June 2009, n. 15).

Figure 113. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. On the left, Tintoretto, *The Siege of Asola*, (fig. 98); on the right, Ribera, *Portrait of Knight of Santiago* (fig.101); Murillo, *Portrait of a Member of the Ostigliani Family* (fig.23).

Figure 114. Photograph of Villa Vittoria. Interior.

Figure 115. Villa Vittoria, Florence, prior to 1935, when the Count sold the painting Piero di Cosimo, *Allegory*, to Samuel Henry Kress. National Gallery of Art Washington DC, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.160.

Figure 116. Photograph of Samuel Henry Kress.

Figure 117. Photograph. Samuel H. Kress apartment, New York City. Vittore Carpaccio, *Prudence ad Temperance*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation; gift to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in 1961, no. 58.36, 58.35.

Figure 119. Follower of Goya, *A Maja with Two Toreros*, oil on canvas, 72 1/8 x 39 3/8 in, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, The Samuel H. Kress Collection, 61.57.

Figure 120. Cover of the catalogue for the Kress Travelling Exhibition.

Figure 121. Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of Sir John Reade*, pastel, The National Gallery of Art, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.66.

Figure 122. Lorenzo Tiepolo, *Young Woman with a Parrot*, pastel, 66 x 52 cm, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, TX, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.1.48.

Figure 123. Pierto Longhi, *The Faint*, oil on canvas, 50 x 61.7 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.63.

Figure 124. Giovan Battista Tiepolo, *Roman Matrons Making Offerings to Juno*, oil on canvas, 144.5 x 112.7 cm, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 32.6.

Figure 125. Circle of Giorgione, *Venus and Cupid in a Landscape*, oil on panel, 11 x 20 cm , The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of Sameul Henry Kress, 1939.1.142.

Figure 126. Photograph of the display of the Kress Exhibition, Gibbes Museum, Charleston, SC. venue in 1935.

Figure 127. Tanzio da Varallo, *Saint Sebastian*, oil on canvas, 117.3 x 93.7 , The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.91.

Figure 128. Pensionante del Saraceni, *Still Life*, oil on canvas, 50.4 x 71.6 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of Sameul Henry Kress, 1939.1.156.

Figure 129. Girolamo Boltraffio, *Portrait of the Poet Casio*, oil on panel, 51.5 x 37 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 28.

Figure 130. Niccolo dell'Abate, *Portrait of a Gentleman with a Falcon*, oil on canvas, 139.5 x 117.0, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sidney, 167.1991.

Figure 131. Giovan Battista Moroni, *Portrait of an Old Man*, oil on canvas, The Norton Simon Foundation, Los Angeles, CA,F.1969.29.P.

Figure 132. Andrea del Castagno, *Madonna in trono col Bambino, i santi Giovanni battista e Girolamo, angeli e due fanciulli della famiglia Pazzi* (Affresco del Trebbio), detached fresco, 290 x 212 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection,n. 2.

Figure 133. Salvator Rosa, *Saint Peter*, oil on canvas, 126.2 x 98.2 cm, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation 1961.

Figure 134. Salvator Rosa, *Saint Simon the Apostle*, oil on canvas, 125.7 x 95.2 cm, Georgia Museum of Art,Athens, GA, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.1888.

Figure 135. Tuscan 13th Century, *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter, and Two Angels*, tempera on panel, 34.3 × 24.7 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1952.5.60.

Figure 136. Master of the Straus Madonna, *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera and gold on panel, 34.5 x 27 cm. Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.161.

Figure 137. Adriobyzantine Master, *Madonna and Child*, tempera and gold on wood, 118.2 x 78.2 cm, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, TX, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.1.1.

Figure 138. Elisabetta Sirani, *Head of Christ*, oil on canvas, 43.2 x 35.6, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, PR, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 62.0264.

Figure 139. Fra Vittore Ghislandi, *Portrait of a Young Man with a Turban*, oil on canvas, 139.7 x 101 cm, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, GL.60.17.54.

Figure 140. Giovan Gerolamo Savoldo, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, oil on panel, 84.5 x 119.7 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.86.

Figure 141. Carlo Dolci, *St. Paul the Hermit Fed by the Raven*, oil on canvas, 72.7 x 54.6 cm, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Figure 142. Agnolo Bronzino, *Eleonora di Toledo*, oil on panel, 86.4 x 65.1 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.7.

Figure 143. Paolo Veronese, *Saint Lucy and a Donor*, oil on canvas, 180.6 x 115.3 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.48.

Figure 144. Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Elijah Fed by the Raven*, oil on panel, 168 x 135.6 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.35.

Figure 145. Titian, *Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos*, oil on canvas, 237.6 x 263 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1957.14.6.

Figure 146. Sassetta, *Madonna of the Snow Altarpiece*, Tempera and Gold on panel, 240x256, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection. 1.

Figure 147. Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Jerome in the Desert*, oil on panel, 145 x 114 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 25.

Figure 148. Lorenzo Lotto, *Susanna and the Elders*, oil on panel, 66 x 51 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence,

Figure 149. Bramantino (Bartolomeo Suardi), *Madonna with the Child and eight Saints*, tempera on panel, 203x167, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 3





## **Glossary**

AAA: Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, U.S.

ACS: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Italy.

GA-NGA: Gallery Archives, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, U.S.

GRI: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, U.S.

HUAMA: Harvard University Art Museum Archives, Cambridge, MA, U.S.

NARA: National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, U.S.

RKD: Rijksbureau Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague, Netherlands.

SHKFA: Samuel Henry Kress Foundation Archives, New York, NY, U.S.

SMB-ZA: Staatliche Museum Zentralarchiv, Berlin, Germany.



## Introduction

This thesis puts forward for analysis archival evidence documenting the activities of the Italian private art dealer Alessandro Contini Bonacossi (1878-1955) in the international secondary art market for Old Master paintings during the first half of the twentieth century. How and under what circumstances Contini Bonacossi was to become one of, if not the most, internationally successful Italian dealers of the interwar years, making choice acquisitions across Europe and the U.S. and selling to leading American collectors and philanthropists, is the subject of this work. Historically, Contini Bonacossi belongs to the group of European dealers of the first half of the last century who, according to Iain Robertson, “unlocked the US capital by identifying the right European art” and “made fortunes from the transatlantic Old Masters trade.”<sup>1</sup> In 1912, in an article translated by the *New York Times*, the celebrated scholar and curator Wilhelm von Bode underlined the cultural power of this trade and defined these dealers as “bearers of European culture”.<sup>2</sup> In 1992, the renowned scholar of collecting, Krzysztof Pomian, in characterizing the American art collector as an *evergete*, reiterated the social and cultural impact of the cross-continental movement of cultural goods that these dealers enabled.<sup>3</sup>

The Italian word *antiquario*, in its modern sense, seems appropriate to describe Contini Bonacossi, as I will explain in detail. It is the blurred boundary between collector and dealer that characterizes his work, which I have signaled in the use of the term in the title, and which defines Contini Bonacossi an *antiquario*. Pomian’s term *evergete* captures and extends this sense of the art market in which Contini Bonacossi, among others, worked. *Evergete* identifies the key importance of their work as bearers of culture, dealers whose work led to the formation of major museums and collections, and who extended knowledge about European art to the

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<sup>1</sup>Robertson, 2005, 55; Holler and Klose-Ullmann, 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Bode’s interview with *The New York Times*, 28 January 1912, part V, 12 (translated from *Die Woche*).

<sup>3</sup>“In the US, the collector is seen as a virtual *evergete* who brings into his country works of art from the past and then creates the appropriate conditions to make them stay. He can enable his country of educational and recreative institutions with the aim of regenerating the social tissue”, Pomian, 1992, 18.

North American continent through their extensive contributions to the scope and character of the most significant US collections and collectors.

Methodologically, this thesis proceeds through rigorous analysis of previously unknown archival materials concerning the conduct of Contini Bonacossi's activities in the art market. The field of art-dealing and its role in the formation of major museums and cultural institutions is a largely undiscovered one within art-historical studies. As a new area of enquiry, the current state of the field requires extensive primary research in order to map the depth and parameters of what kinds of information about figures such as Contini Bonacossi it is possible to retrieve and reconstruct, through careful piecing together of the archival evidence. This dissertation therefore offers crucial steps in the development of a new area within art-historical studies, all based on original archival work, in order to map out what kinds of new knowledge this type of research can offer on a crucial yet neglected chapter in the history of art. In essence, it seeks to extend the boundaries of the discipline through the study of new types of records for research. It makes a major contribution to knowledge through the discovery of new types of source material; at the same time, it offers a range of analytical perspectives through which to understand these archival findings. Specifically, the four chapters, detailed further below, offer four modes of enquiry into the documentary materials on the art dealer and his trade: biography; business networks; display methods; and the dealer's role in the movement of European Old Master art in major American museums through the example of Contini Bonacossi's primary part in the formation of the Kress Collection.

This dissertation has two main goals: to unearth archival material related to the commercial activities of the Italian private art dealer Alessandro Contini Bonacossi (1878-1955) in the international secondary art market for Old Masters paintings; and to investigate the historical significance of his prominent role in the formation of American art collections during the first half of the twentieth century. In doing so, the research presents new documentary sources for the study of the history of private and public collecting during its crucial years in the United States. Although the

results of this work are restricted to the specifics of the Contini Bonacossi case, this work aims to lay the foundations for further studies related to the social and cultural impact of the resale art trade, as well of the role of the trade's dealers, who are considered here as sellers and ambassadors of culture in historic times.

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Like many of his foreign competitors, such as Charles Sedelmeyer or Georges Petit, Contini Bonacossi's business archive seems to have been lost forever.<sup>4</sup> The only exception -- although never before considered in this depth -- are of his dealings with his most important and loyal customer Samuel Henry Kress (1863-1955), the American magnate whose philanthropy would fund the world-renowned Kress Collection of Old Master paintings eventually donated to museums and galleries across the U.S. Thus, Contini Bonacossi's network and transactions have remained obscured, instilling doubts about the legitimacy of his business and making it hard to reconstruct to whom he sold artworks and from whom he bought them (as well as the prices), therefore, to contextualize his commerce in a broader socio-economic history of collecting. My research offers a new contribution in presenting new documentary material for analysis. It provides evidence that pieces together for the first time Contini Bonacossi's networks of dealers, collectors, scholars, agents, and museum professionals, shedding light on his *modus operandi*. The extensive use of a variety of unpublished primary sources, housed in archives in Europe and the United States, brought to light an international ecosystem of human relations around Contini Bonacossi. The web of clients that emerges from this documentary evidence is composed for the most part of wealthy Americans, those "plutocrats" defined by Roger Fry as "classicist purchasers" whose commercial sensibility was intertwined with cultural patronage, commercial entrepreneurship, and civic pride.<sup>5</sup> Contini Bonacossi's historical relevance must be explained in the context of the development of American public and private collections and in the socio-political substrate that tied the U.S. to Italy during the interwar years, in particular during the 1920s. Indeed,

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<sup>4</sup>Huemer, 2004.

<sup>5</sup>Fry, 1926; Goodwin, 1998.

most, if not all, of Contini Bonacossi's business activities that we can document to date involved American clients. A good portion of his U.S. network was composed of American financiers, a fact that contributed to the success of his business, as this thesis will analyse.

Specifically, the bulk of Contini Bonacossi's commercial activities were oriented towards two distinct categories of American customers.<sup>6</sup> One type was the art collector-philanthropist engaged in buying art with the ultimate goal of creating and implementing public art collections in the United States through gifts, bequests, or purchasing on behalf of a patronized cultural institution.<sup>7</sup> The other was the museum professional, at times a museum director or the curator in charge of a public institution's art collection. Because the vast majority of artifacts these collectors acquired from Contini Bonacossi (that we can document at this date) never re-entered the market or became cultural goods made available for public consumption, one may argue that these buyers were engaged in non-speculative purchases.<sup>8</sup> The philanthropic aspect of these buyers' purchases encouraged me, without disregarding the economic dimension of these transactions, to approach the art market with an emphasis on its socio-cultural aspect and therefore to consider these transactions also as political and cultural exchanges. Special attention is given to his most enduring and best-documented business relationship, with Samuel Henry Kress (1863-1955). I explore the legacy of Contini Bonacossi's business with an emphasis on the fact that he was serving a cultural-philanthropic cause. Ultimately, this text aims to lay the foundations for further studies of the social and cultural impact of the resale art trade, as well of the role of the trade's dealers, who are considered here as sellers of culture in historic times.

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<sup>6</sup>As mentioned the lack of systematic primary sources (stock books) regarding Contini Bonacossi's dealings prevents us putting forward details regarding his ownership (full or partial). Therefore, clearing any doubts about the transfer of ownership or legal title between the dealer and his client for the objects that were not covered by the casualties put forward in the second chapter of this dissertation should still be considered as part of a work in progress.

<sup>7</sup>The history regarding American cultural philanthropy goes beyond the scope of this work. Culture and philanthropy are complex concepts, and I do not intend to define them. Here I refer to these concepts as understood by the following authors: Katz, 2006; Acs and Phillips, 2002; Smith, 2010; Williams, 2006; Hamlett, 2009.

<sup>8</sup>The concept of cultural goods as distinct from artistic goods is investigated by McCain, 2006. For a concise set of the characteristics that define cultural goods, Throsby, 2006.

## *Literature review*

In recent years, the history of the art market has been the subject of considerable research and scholarship encouraged by the increasing availability of significant research resources, both online and *in situ* at major research institutions and museums. New technologies, such as complex relational databases together with the digitization of dealers' and collectors' inventories and archives, allowed me to investigate, as comprehensively as the current resources allow, and to answer previously unanswerable questions, opening new research ventures in the history of the modern art market as well as those of previous eras.

As Christian Huemer wrote in 2014:

Only recently have some crucial dealer archives of the period become publicly accessible: the National Gallery, London, acquired the papers of Thomas Agnew and Sons, and the Colnaghi archive just moved from an inaccessible warehouse in the east of London to Waddesdon Manor, a Rothschild estate, an occasion that is being celebrated with a conference on 'Art Dealing in the Gilded Age' this week. Starting in October at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, a Durand-Ruel exhibition taking advantage of his archive will tour Europe and the United States. The Getty Research Institute acquired the M. Knoedler & Co. archive in 2012, uniting it with the Institute's extensive holdings of important dealer materials in the Special Collections such as those of Duveen Bros., Goupil, Boussod & Valadon, Arnold et Tripp, and many others.<sup>9</sup>

Still though, the important role of dealers in the formation of public and private collections and their role as cultural agents as argued by Wilhelm von Bode at the service of -what the philosopher Krzysztof Pomian called- *evergeti* across the Atlantic seem to have attracted less attention than the analysis of their activities from an economic or sociological point of view.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Huemer, 2014.

<sup>10</sup>Bode, 1912; Pomian, 1992, 18.



As Lynn Catterson noted “this topic is infrequently addressed in the many studies on collectors and the content of their collections”.<sup>11</sup> My research seeks to fill this lacuna in the scholarship.

Even less attention has been given to dealers, especially Italians, whose activities flourished during the 1920s, a decade whose complexity still merits a great deal of work by scholars, as this study demonstrates. My concern in investigating Contini Bonacossi’s activities lies primarily in my interest in the art market as a phenomenon described by Lionello Venturi as *momento sospensivo nella storia esterna dell’opera d’arte*. Venturi understood the art market as a transitional moment in the external history of an artwork, drawing attention to how dealers used this transition at any given moment in history.<sup>12</sup> Intellectually, this work rests on the aesthetic principles expressed by Pomian in his museological studies, specifically for the concept of the American collector as *evergete* explored in his essay “Introduction. L’Art entre le musée et le marché”.<sup>13</sup> This definition was instrumental for me to investigate the *raison d’être* of Contini Bonacossi’s business, as at this stage, my research has shown that most, if not all, Contini Bonacossi’s business contacts were, indeed, *evergeti*. The concept of “collection” as described by Pomian in *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, informed my reasoning for proposing the definition of Contini Bonacossi as an *antiquario* and of Contini Bonacossi’s stock over the time as a *galleria* rather than a collection.<sup>14</sup>

Methodologically this work owes a great debt to the work of the art historian Francis Haskell for his approach to art history as grounded in written documents as well as on art objects and collections. During the course of this work, I came to consider Contini Bonacossi’s sales of cultural goods, as well as his clients’ purchases, not just as economic transactions *tout-court*, but as cultural exchanges. I was inspired in this direction not only by the analysis of primary material that consistently revealed the

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<sup>11</sup>Catterson, 2017, 3.

<sup>12</sup>Venturi (1929), XVII.

<sup>13</sup>Pomian, 1992, 9-31.

<sup>14</sup>Pomian, 1978.

philanthropic aspect of these buyers' purchases, but also by the sociological and anthropological analysis of the practice of collecting and cultural exchanges offered by Genevieve Warwick in her volume *Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe*.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the transatlantic movement of cultural goods that resulted from the commercial transactions analyzed in this work raise broader questions related to the wide-ranging field of cultural economics, a relatively recent discipline "located at the crossroads of several disciplines, such as art history, art philosophy, sociology, law management, and economics" as expressed by Victor Ginsburgh and David Throsby in the introductory note of the volume *Handbook of the Economics of arts and culture*.<sup>16</sup> Their collection of heterogeneous studies offers an update and an historical account of the development of studies in the field. Their wide-range approach (such as historical, economic, legal, the relationship between culture and economy, heritage, policy) has been most useful to fully embed my analysis in current discourse as well as to frame intellectually some of key concepts than run through this project. Although their discussion does not encompass the focus of this study, they have been acknowledged throughout. This is the case for example of the term "cultural good" whose meaning here is not argued but adopted as defined by David Throsby in his *Introduction and Overview*. Throsby characterizes the cultural good as of having "some public good properties, they result from human creativity and they embody forms of value that are not fully expressed by the monetary value".<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in this work I refer to the concept of philanthropy as understood by Stanley Katz in his 2006 essay "Philanthropy." According to Katz "philanthropy in America at the turn of the century differs from charity because of its aim: "philanthropy" aims at the systematic eradication of social ills, rather than, as charity does, at their amelioration".<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Warwick, 2000.

<sup>16</sup>Ginsburgh, 2001.

<sup>17</sup>Throsby, 2006, 7.

<sup>18</sup>Katz, 2006, 1300.

As mentioned, the absence of Contini Bonacossi's business records required extensive primary research to put forward documentary evidence of a direct transfer of ownership between Contini Bonacossi and the previous, as well as subsequent, owners of the paintings he traded with. The careful work of piecing together scattered archival evidence allowed me to reconstruct Contini Bonacossi's business network, therefore his market. The importance of presenting this kind of evidence as a *condicio sine qua non* for analyzing his business is emphasized by the definition of the concept of market given by Thomas Bayer and John Page in their volume *The Development of the Art Market in England: Money as Muse, 1730-1900*. Indeed, according to Bayer and Page, a market is a structure where:

owners of property rights make contact with one another for transferring ownership, usually for money. It is not a monolithic, tangible structure but a mechanism composed of different parts all intended to facilitate this transfer of ownership of property rights.<sup>19</sup>

Strictly related to this idea of the market as a structure of exchange of ownership for money is the concept of value. Value in this work is considered according to the definition proposed by Arjun Appaduraj in his book *The Social Life of Things*. Appaduraj helpfully argues that it is this economic exchange which creates the value of objects circulating in a specific cultural milieu.<sup>20</sup>

The same exploration of archival material has been needed to document Contini Bonacossi's *gallerie* and his display strategies. The primary sources used here revealed Wilhelm von Bode's important role in Contini Bonacossi display criteria in the early stages of his career. Bode's museological and display innovations is a subject well explored in the literature, especially abundant is the literature in German. The studies here referenced by Max Seidel "Das Renaissance-Museum: Wilhelm Bode als "Schuler" von Jakob Burckhardt", Malcom Baker "Bode and Museum Display: The Arrangement of the Kaiser Friederich Museum and the South Kensington Response" as well as Julien Capius "Bode un Amerika. Eine komplexe

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<sup>19</sup>Bayer and Page, 2011, 281.

<sup>20</sup>Appaduraj, 2013.

Beziehung” are the ones I found most compelling for my analysis.<sup>21</sup> For what concerns scholarly works that similarly to this project investigate Bode’s relationship with dealers based on the scholar’s correspondence, the study by Anna Tüskés, “Mercanti Veneziani e Wilhelm von Bode” and the book by Valerie Neymeyer-Cini, *Stefano Bardini e Wilhelm von Bode: mercanti e connoisseur fra Ottocento e Novecento* are among those that have been most helpful.<sup>22</sup>

The primary readings I have employed as a foundation for the aspects of this work that deal with the mechanism of the art market are numerous. For their interpretation on a worldwide basis I found crucial the volumes by Gerard Reitlinger, *Economics of Taste* and Peter Watson, *From Manet to Manhattan: The Rise of the Modern Art Market*, while Jeremy Warren and Adriana Turpin’s collection of essays *Auctions, Agents, and Dealers: The Mechanisms of the Art Market*, helpfully analyze its processes (for example, valuation, exchange, connoisseurship, dissemination).<sup>23</sup> The miscellaneous volume by Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich contained in *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London 1850-1939* on the development of the modern retail market in fine art and the emergence of the structures and practices that have come to characterize the commercial art system as an international network for the circulation of goods have been particularly useful for profiling Contini Bonacossi as a professional art dealer and exemplifying him as a private dealer operating in the international secondary market.<sup>24</sup> Mark Westgarth’s essay “The London picture trade c.1850” informed my understanding of the mechanism of price and sales employed by dealers and therefore, by comparison and in the light of the archival evidence, induced me to conclude that Contini Bonacossi’s *modus operandi* in the resale art market was primarily the private sale.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Seidel, 1999, 55-109; Baker, 1996, 143-153; Capius, 2007, 145-176.

<sup>22</sup>Tüskés, 2103, 145-163; Neymeyer-Cini, 2009.

<sup>23</sup>Reitlinger, 1961-1970; Watson, 1992; Warren and Turpin, 2008.

<sup>24</sup>Fletcher and Helmreich, 2011.

<sup>25</sup>Westgarth, 2011, 40.

The meagerness of current studies on Italian art dealers active during the years that directly affected Contini Bonacossi's time represented a challenge in my attempt to contextualize how Contini Bonacossi's approach fitted with that of his rivals. I have found particularly useful Ugo Jandolo *Memorie di un Antiquario*; Luigi Bellini *Nel mondo degli antiquari*, Simone Bargellini *Antiquari di Ieri*.<sup>26</sup> Although dated, these volumes are still the standard reference works on the most prominent dealers in Italy during those years and a good source of inspiration for further research. Paolo Coen's "Esportare opere d'arte da Roma nel 1900. Dalla tradizione artigiana al made in Italy" is a pioneering study on the export business in Rome at the turn of the century based on the use, never undertaken before, of export licenses.<sup>27</sup> Coen utilizes this type of archival material for analyzing the flow of the market highlighting the role of intermediaries, such as shippers, still a neglected aspect, particularly pertinent for me to contextualize Contini Bonacossi's trade in the Italian capital. Unlike Coen, though, I used this kind of material with the goal of uncovering provenance information related to objects traded by Contini Bonacossi.

Crucial to the understanding of the historical background of the 1920s, a decade still little explored from the point of view of the art market especially in Italy and that represents the coming of age of Contini Bonacossi as a prominent art dealer, have been the studies by the historian Gian Giacomo Migone *Stati Uniti e il Fascismo: alle origini dell'egemonia americana in Italia* and *Problemi di Storia nei Rapporti tra Italia e Stati Uniti*, still considered the authority for anyone interested in the relationship between the US and Italy during the 1920s.<sup>28</sup> The essays by two historians "Fascism for Export: Italy and the United States in the Twenties" by Alan Cassel and "Il Corporativismo Nel Giudizio Dei Diplomatici Americani a Roma" by Maurizio Vaudagna were both useful to clarify diplomacy during the 1920s in their respective countries, while the studies by Paul Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: A View from America* and his essay "Flirtation with Fascism: American Pragmatic Liberals and Mussolini's Italy" offered an analysis of the American perspective of

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<sup>26</sup>Jandolo, 1935; Bellini, 1947; Bargellini, 1981.

<sup>27</sup>Coen, 2014, 285-304.

<sup>28</sup>Migone, 1980; 1971.

the Italian political climate.<sup>29</sup> These kind of historical studies helped me to contextualize Contini Bonacossi's successful business, shedding light on how, for example, his prestigious American clientele (for the large part Jewish financiers like Sachs, Warburg, Kahn) fit with his involvement in the Fascist Italian political environment of the time.

Investigating the relationship between art and Fascism as well as the cultural policy of the Fascist government was beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, I did explore some of the vast literature addressing these issues, like Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum. *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* or Medina Lasansky *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*.<sup>30</sup> As this dissertation focuses on Contini Bonacossi's Old Masters trade for paintings in the secondary market it was more pertinent to focus my attention on literature that explored the use of Old Masters paintings by the Italian government. The subject was explored for the first time, although related to the UK rather than the US, by Francis Haskell in "Fascism and Burlington House. The Italian Exhibition of 1930". Haskell's analysis of the Italian government use of Old Masters as a tool for cultural diplomacy remained an isolated case for many years.<sup>31</sup> Only recently has Haskell's idea has been re-evaluated, though from the US perspective, by two recent publications: the essay by Davide Bertolini and Roberta Porfiri "Una esposizione di carattere eccezionalissimo. 1940: Italian Masters al Museum of Modern Art di New York" as well as the volume by Lorenzo Carletti and Christiano Giometti. *Raffaello on the Road: Rinascimento e Propaganda Fascista in America 1938-40*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Cassel, 1964, 707-712; Vaudagna, 1975, 764-96; Diggins, 1972, Diggins, 1996, 487-506.

<sup>30</sup>Lazzaro-Crum, 2005; Lasansky, 2004.

<sup>31</sup>Haskell, 1999, 462-472.

<sup>32</sup>Bertolini-Porfiri, 2014, 287-237; Carletti- Giometti, 2016.

The main goal of this work, as mentioned, was not analysis of American philanthropy, its history or practice as related to the formation of American museums (a subject well explored in existing scholarly studies), but rather to document how Contini Bonacossi's activities interacted with this cultural landscape. To do so, it was necessary to investigate the literature framing the US socio-cultural context of philanthropy. The historical and social account of the historian Robert Bremner provided in *American Philanthropy 1917-2002* enlarged my understanding of the scope of American philanthropy through study of the ways in which Americans have sought to do good in such fields as religion, education, humanitarian reform, social service, war relief, and foreign aid.<sup>33</sup> In this process, I relied heavily on cultural history studies, of which I can touch on only a few here. The anthology by Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions. Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* with its extensive and varied bibliographical references is still a brilliant overview of key topics on American cultural history, especially for in relation to material culture.<sup>34</sup> His essay "Collective Possession: J. Pierpont Morgan and the American imagination" was particularly useful for this study. Through the example of the financial tycoon, Harris acknowledges a concept that this dissertation demonstrates: that the dealers who enabled this cross-continental movement of art between Europe and the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century, like Contini Bonacossi, effectively helped to shape national opinion or taste as much as their clients, becoming tastemakers, he argues, "bearers of culture", confirming *de facto* Bode's statement. Harris's essay "Museums, merchandising and popular taste: the struggle for influence" emphasizes the synergies between the department store culture that exploded in the US between the 1920s and 1930s, and museums, by comparing their respective display as well as collecting criteria. A fascinating topic still little explored, Harris shows how in the 1920s and the 1930s stores outdistanced museums in display criteria (highlighting the period room) and retailed original artworks themselves. As Contini Bonacossi's most important client, Kress was a department store magnate as well as an art philanthropist specifically

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<sup>33</sup>Bremner, 1988.

<sup>34</sup>Harris, 1990.

interested in museum collections, it has been especially interesting to consider this connection.<sup>35</sup>

The thematic history of museums by Andrew McClellan *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* offered me a comprehensive historical, theoretical and critical perspective on the museum as a cultural and social institution. Particularly useful are the brief references to the development of US museums in the interwar years, a field that would greatly benefit from a deeper archival investigation and historical analysis.<sup>36</sup> Yet it is the investigation of the American art museum in the decades between 1890 and 1930 as a socio-cultural phenomenon by Ingrid Steffensen-Bruce *Marble Palaces, Temples of Art: Art Museums, Architecture, and American Culture*, that elucidates best the *Zeitgeist* in which Contini Bonacossi's commerce took place. Her account was crucial for contextualizing its historical relevance and for the accomplishment of at least one goal of this project: to assess if, and if so how Contini Bonacossi's trade from 1927 to 1955 with Kress was affected by his client's philanthropic endeavors. In her work, Steffensen-Bruce states that

the repeated linking [in the primary sources she quotes] of the art museums to the improvement of towns and its citizens indicates once again the importance of the art museum to the City Beautiful Movement".<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, Steffensen-Bruce's contextualization of the development of American museums within the Beautiful City Movement sheds light on the historical context that likely shaped Kress's collecting activities as well as his philanthropic spirit and muse as I argue in this work. Kress understood building museum collections as a form of civic duty, making him *de facto* an *evergete*. I believe that it is only in this cultural context that the extraordinary volume of trade generated by the Kress-Contini Bonacossi partnership which I present here, through the analysis of its patterns as revealed through drawing together the varied primary sources (not only bills of sales, but immigration records as well as correspondence), can be explained.

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<sup>35</sup>Harris, 1990, 72.

<sup>36</sup>McClellan, 2008.

<sup>37</sup>Steffensen-Bruce, 1998, 128.



Contini Bonacossi's sales are revealed to be a significant cultural contribution and therefore confirm his role as a "seller of culture" at the service of an *evergete*.<sup>38</sup>

Historical biographies, Ron Chernow *The Warburgs: The Twentieth-Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family*, or the most recent work by Roberta Raspagliesi, *Guido Jung, Imprenditore ebreo e Ministro Fascista* represent the kind of biographical literature that inspired the planning stages of this project. Edward P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* stands as an outstanding exemplar of the historical biographical genre, rich in potential if applied to the subject of this work.<sup>39</sup>

Biography as an historical genre has enjoyed an alternating *fortuna* and has stimulated debates among historians regarding the legitimacy of the biographical approach as an historical research method. As Monica Rebeschini pointed out in her essay on the topic "La Biografia come genere storiografico tra storia politica e storia sociale. Questioni di prospettive e di metodo", the acknowledgment of biography as a valid historiographical genre with full scientific autonomy is a recent achievement, although, as she pointed out, already the Greek philosopher and historian Plutarch in I AD had advocated for the genre as a tool of historical knowledge.<sup>40</sup> It was Arnaldo Momigliano in his study *The Development of Greek Biography* that opened the debate regarding the full theorization of the biographical method.<sup>41</sup> Lawrence Goldman too has recently highlighted the importance of the biographical method in his essay "History and Biography", arguing that the best historical research and the most readable history require both types of analysis, biographical as well as historical, in order for an historical biography to go beyond a merely biographical account:

the point [...] is not to vindicate one or other of these methods of preserving the past, whether historical or biographical. Nor is it to dogmatize about the best sort of biography or the best theory of history. It is rather to encourage

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<sup>38</sup>Steffensen-Bruce, 1998. The city beautiful movement is also addressed in Brewer, 2009.

<sup>39</sup>Thompson, 201; Chernow, 1993; Raspagliesi, 2012.

<sup>40</sup>Rebeschini, 2006, 427-446.

<sup>41</sup>Momigliano, 1971.

further attempts at the integration of structural and personal approaches, though always with care, with an eye to the sources, and with an awareness of the limitations of both of these ways of writing about the past when taken on their own.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the nature of the primary material I have uncovered in this study – diaries, letters, bills of sale - the biographical approach as a primary historical research method was the most suitable to contextualize the findings in a compelling way. Valeria Sgambati highlighted in her essay “Lusinghe della Biografia” one of the key characteristics of the biography as a historical genre: the enhancement of the relationship between the individual and the general that is proper to historical research.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, adopting the biographical approach has allowed me not only to study the subject within the context of its era, but also, through chronological criteria, to connect Contini Bonacossi’s collecting/dealing activities to the most important historical trends of his time. This approach enabled the centerpiece of my analysis, the definition of Contini Bonacossi as an *antiquario de son temps* and as such to use his life as a key to open a door on the collecting history of his time.

#### *Alessandro Contini Bonacossi: Literature and Sources*

Biographical literature based on archival sources specific to Contini Bonacossi’s life is slight. The entry published in the *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani* (in the *Enciclopedia Treccani*) is informative for his biographical data.<sup>44</sup> Partial biographical information can be also found in articles that appeared in conjunction with public events in which Contini Bonacossi was a leading figure, like exhibitions, donations, and openings.<sup>45</sup> A volume titled *Vittoria Contini Bonacossi. Diario Americano 1926-1929* contains the official transcript of Alessandro Contini Bonacossi’s wife’s diaries.

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<sup>42</sup>Goldman, 2016, 411.

<sup>43</sup>Sgambati, 1995,397-413.

<sup>44</sup>Caputo Calloud, 1983, 523-526.

<sup>45</sup>Bellini, 1947,304; Batini, 1961,40,189,201; Pampaloni and Salmi, 1963, 21-23; Lamberti, 1980,8; Listri, 1969; Zaninelli, , 2010.

Written during their trips to the US, these diaries give an indication of his trade.<sup>46</sup> For what concerns his commerce, an excellent and unique source of photographic material related to works of art that transited through Contini Bonacossi's *gallerie* is represented by the Giuseppe and Vittorio Jacquier Photoarchive. Although the photographs cannot be considered as irrefutable proofs of ownership for individual works and although it is not exhaustive, as it was severely damaged by the flood that occurred in Florence in 1966, this photoarchive contains over 500 glass negatives of pictures of works of art commissioned to the Jacquier Firm by Alessandro Contini Bonacossi up until 1935 and it is useful to at least locate artworks at given times. The Sovrintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici in Florence bought it directly from the firm in 1943. Housed at the Gabinetto Fotografico dell'Archivio Storico della Sovrintendenza, it is open to public access. A compendium of its holdings was published in 1995 in the volume by Marilena Tamassia *Collezioni d'Arte tra Ottocento e Novecento. Jacquier fotografi a Firenze 1870-1935*.<sup>47</sup> The Contini-Volterra Photographic Archive housed in the Special Collection of the Heard Library at Vanderbilt University in Nashville was created by Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to supplement his own knowledge and understanding of art. An invaluable resource for the study of art history and the role of photography, at his death it was acquired and expanded by his long-time "aide" Gualtiero Volterra with the help of many scholars.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007. The book is fundamental to understanding Contini Bonacossi's trading and his connections in the US, as well as the state of American public and private art collections on the East Coast between 1926 and 1929. The publication of this volume was based on the research I conducted for my Master thesis in Art History and Museum Studies at the University of Florence, Zaninelli, 2004.

<sup>47</sup>Tamassia, 1995.

<sup>48</sup>The collection is in part accessible on line at through <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/cv.pl>.

### *Primary Sources*

This work is based on extensive research into archival documentation that is for the most part unpublished. The nature of this archival material is extremely varied and can be divided into the following groups. The first includes correspondence, bills of sale, and visual materials from European and American archives such as the Gallery Archives at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (GA-NGA); the Harvard University Art Museum Archives (HUAMA); the Getty Research Institute (GRI); the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation Archives in New York (SHKFA); the Staatliche Museum's Zentralarchiv in Berlin (SMB-ZA); Centro di Documentazione, Ufficio Catalogo, Polo Museale Fiorentino; and the Archives at the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico, Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze. I made extensive use of digital collections online related to dealers, such as Heinemann Galleries. The second group includes records produced by governmental institutions, such as immigration records and reports produced during war time, export licenses, and customs records. I retrieved these documents from the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, USA (NARA) and from the Archivio di Stato in Rome, Italy (ACS). The fourth category contains family papers, still in private hands, which I accessed during research for my Master thesis at the University of Florence.

I have included all quoted material in its original language in the body of the text, with an appendix of translations at the close of the dissertation, which are all my own unless otherwise stated.

### *Methodology and Structure*

To date, there are no comprehensive scholarly studies devoted to Contini Bonacossi's trade as a standalone subject or to his role in the cultural system of the first half of the last century, and more specifically, of the interwar years, the core of his activities. This dissertation's goal is to bridge this gap. Therefore, in order to create my argument –the documentation and the discussion of the historical pertinence of Contini Bonacossi's activities- my methodological approach had to be grounded in the unearthing of primary archival evidence, analyzed through a

contextualized knowledge of the larger contingent historical fields of enquiry pertaining to the material. This project then stands on the strength of extensive archival research, which is its chosen research methodology. Analysis of the rich archival material proposed in this work is undertaken throughout the text according to the four thematic chapters. I consider this research as a work in progress, thus per *force majeure*, its full theorization remains an open question.

Contini Bonacossi's biography is presented in the first chapter in two sections. The first is a historical biography that provides detailed context for this elusive figure and his engagement with the historical and political environment he operated in. The second is a study of the key people in Contini Bonacossi's circle who were fundamental to establishing his aesthetic background and the social and cultural context of his work. Of note, I will analyze in detail the unpublished correspondence with the German scholar Wilhelm von Bode, whose relationship with Contini Bonacossi, as well as the letters they exchanged, were unknown until now. The second chapter presents, for the first time, documentary evidence of Contini Bonacossi's financial transactions and business ties with other European dealers, agents, and American clients. The absence of his stock books forced me to look for traces of his commerce in other dealers' archives in order to understand how and under which circumstances the objects he traded came into his possession. The intent and the merit of this chapter is to provide for the first time a repertoire of Contini Bonacossi's network restricted to dealers and clients for whom evidence of a direct transfer of ownership is supported by primary sources. The archives reported here are only the first examples of an ensemble that will probably expand as new dealers' archives and resources are made publicly available. This study has brought to light unknown connections Contini Bonacossi had with members of the Harvard community, such as Paul Sachs (1878-1965) and Edward Forbes (1873-1969), as well as members of the American community in Rome, such as Friedley, who were fundamental to his breakthrough in the American market and therefore crucial to a historically and culturally contextualized account of his activities. The third chapter puts forward for the first time documentary evidence of his house-*gallerie* and the objects he chose for display during the 1920s in Rome and during the 1940s in

Florence as an active dealer. The analysis presented here strictly adheres to the criteria appearing in the primary sources (also for what concerns the attributions of the works of art). Although it is not yet possible to provide evidence of a transaction with a previous owner for every object mentioned in the primary sources used here, these sources revealed seminal information regarding the date of entrance of new works into Contini Bonacossi's *galleria*, prices, range of his portfolio, and his clients. In adding a new layer of interpretation of his business, these sources allow us to elucidate the methods he used to market his stock in his *case-gallerie* in Rome and Florence during his years as an *antiquario*. My goal is to offer an understanding of the historical pertinence of Contini Bonacossi's stock during the first decades of the twentieth century. The fourth chapter is dedicated to assessing Contini Bonacossi's legacy through the analysis of his most important and most enduring business relationship with the American collector Samuel Henry Kress and more broadly, serving as a case study for the dealer in his role as a cultural agent and its implications for American collecting and museums.

In the conclusion I summarize the key concepts of this archival and historical investigation that this stage of the research has raised. I also offer some considerations on Contini Bonacossi's personal motivations and drivers, on how he interacted with his clients (who are revealed to be many of the cultural patrons of some of the most important American museums and cultural institutions) and to which this study contributes new knowledge.

### *Contini Bonacossi Antiquario*

In very few instances did Contini Bonacossi speak with regards to his trading activities. That we can document, he never defined himself strictly as an art dealer, instead describing himself as an *amateur* devoted to the commerce of Old Masters.<sup>49</sup> This definition suggests that Contini Bonacossi had a very specific and clear idea about how the different components of the 'art system' -collector, connoisseur, and

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<sup>49</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode 27 February 1914, Zentralarchiv Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nachlass Wilhelm von Bode, Contini Bonacossi Alessandro, 12 letters (1914-1926), from now on SMB-ZA,IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1. The correspondence between Bode and Contini Bonacossi is unpublished and here brought to light for the first time.

dealer-interacted with each other. His view of the ‘system’ of art reflected his business philosophy. Therefore, studying his activities allows us to investigate how the different components of the early twentieth-century art system -art history and connoisseurship, art market and art collecting (according to Alsop the so-called “by-products of art”) interact with each other and how they intersect with the historical milieu in which they took place.<sup>50</sup>

Contini Bonacossi never held a public sale nor, unlike many of his international competitors, had a shop. Indeed, he was not a *negoziante con sporto*, a gallery owner, but *un antiquario in casa e galleria*: his house was his showroom, and the objects he displayed were his own collection, which could or could not be up for sale. As Simone Bargellini points out in his compendium of Florentine art dealers (while discussing Achille de Clemente), this is an important difference.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to clarify the guidelines I used for this analysis of Contini Bonacossi in his role as an *antiquario*: I have adopted the aesthetic principles of the cultural historian and philosopher Krystof Pomian (1934- ), which describe collecting as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and combined them with the approach to archival research of the social art historian Francis Haskell (1928-2000).<sup>52</sup> Specifically, I refer to Pomian’s concepts of the nature of collections and museums and their relationship to the art market, which are expressed in his essays *L’art entre le musée et le marché* and *Entre le visible et l’invisible*.<sup>53</sup>

A complex word, *antiquario* has a broader and deeper meaning than the English term “antique dealer”, and it is also different from the eighteenth-century definition, one who is *erudito*, as explained in Daniela Gallo’s *excursus* about the characteristics and the evolution of the antiquarian profession during that period in Rome.<sup>54</sup> Gallo points out that only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century did the *antiquario* acquire the traits of today’s professional dealer. The profession fully developed around 1870,

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<sup>50</sup>Alsop, 1982, 130.

<sup>51</sup>Bargellini, 1981, 103.

<sup>52</sup>Lee Sorensen, “Francis Haskell” Dictionary of Art Historians. <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/haskellf.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Pomian, 1992, 35.

<sup>54</sup>Gallo, 1999.

in tandem with a flourishing of the art market. Luigi Bellini, another Italian *antiquario* and Contini Bonacossi's peer in Florence, defined the term this way:

L'Antiquario è come l'alchimista, un personaggio misterioso che tratta materia misteriosa e segreta per la comune parte degli uomini. Bisogna che sia in primo luogo amatore d'arte, poi commerciante. Per antiquari intendo tutti coloro che son degni di questo nome, commercianti e collezionisti, poiché non ne esiste uno che non sia collezionista come non esiste un collezionista che non sia antiquario. L'ambizione più grande per lui lasciare alla propria città una collezione che lo ricordi nel tempo. Credete sia possibile formare una raccolta senza selezionarla? Il collezionista diventa per forza maggiore commerciante, vende, baratta. Tutti o quasi tutti vengono da umili origini, specialmente quelli che hanno saputo farsi strada. L'antiquario si giudica da quello che può mostrare, non da quello che ha venduto o non ha più. Il compito maggiore degli antiquari è di formare clienti, cioè riuscire in un modo o nell'altro a fare di un essere qualunque che nella sua vita non ha mai comprato né un quadro né un oggetto d'arte, un tifoso accanito dell'antichità.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Bellini, 1947, 21.





## Chapter I: Historical Biography (1878-1955)

The two sections of this chapter intend to bring to light the life and work of Alessandro Contini Bonacossi in the culture system of the early twentieth century. The first is a *histoire événementielle* aimed at offering historical and biographical details for his life and activities. Set against the context of the major historical events that unfolded during his lifetime (such as Italian unification, the Spanish American war and the rise of the US as a superpower, the subsequent rise of Fascism in Italy and Fascist Italy's relationship with the United States between the two World Wars), the first part will make clear the international dimension of Contini Bonacossi's activities, whose historical relevance can be understood by looking at the European landscape, but foremost the US, for the United States was the dominant economic force during the peak years of his activities "*per volume d'acquisto, potenza finanziaria e capacità di rivitalizzare la domanda.*"<sup>56</sup> The second section is devoted to the recollection and analysis of his relationships with fundamental people in thinner circles of his professional networks who were most influential in the development of his aesthetic background.

From Ancona to Spain: 1878-1909

When Alessandro Contini Bonacossi was born, Italy was a very different country than the one that existed at the time of his death in 1955. The seventy-seven years of his lifetime witnessed the dramatic transformation of Italy from a unified kingdom to a republic (1861-1946) through a sequence of historic turning points.<sup>57</sup> On 18 March 1878, the day Alessandro Contini Bonacossi was born, Italy as a nation was less than twenty years old.

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<sup>56</sup>Lamberti, 1980, 7.

<sup>57</sup>In 1861 Italy became a Nation. In 1915 Italy entered the First War World that, despite the victory, destroyed the economy and brought deep levels of frustration in Italian society. The rise of Fascism in 1922 promised hope of rebirth to a country torn apart by economic distress. This hope and excitement soon started to vanish when Mussolini proclaimed himself as the Duce establishing the Fascist Regime in 1925. After the horrors of the Second World War and the surrender of Italy to the Allied forces in 1943, Italy proclaimed itself as a free Democratic Republic in 1946. The historical literature on this subject is immense. It would be useless to propose a summary.

Ancona, his birthplace, was the center of one of the most important and oldest Jewish communities in Italy.<sup>58</sup> Second only to Rome, it counted nineteen-hundred Jewish residents by the year 1877.<sup>59</sup> It is in Ancona where Contini Bonacossi's grandfather died and where his mother was born. She was Elena Bermudez Bonacossi (1854-1905), a descendant of the Bonacossi of Ferrara, a family whose origin goes back to the House of Bonacossi from Mantua.<sup>60</sup> Her father Alessandro Bonacossi (1832-1875) was the son of Alessandro Bonacossi (1771-1851) and his second wife Marquess Barbara Felici. Elena's grandfather spent an adventurous life between Italy, Spain, and France, where he adopted the fake name Bermudez that passed to his granddaughter. His colorful life still awaits a biography. A supporter of Bonaparte, he was also the author of a few important essays and books of political history, such as *Commentari di Napoleone*, *Compendio Storico della Rivoluzione di Parigi Italia* (1830), and *La Chine et les Chinois* (1847).<sup>61</sup> It was probably for economic reasons that Elena Bermudez Bonacossi's future husband, a native of Ferrara, found himself in Ancona. Camillo Moisé Contini (1849-1891) was Jewish, born in Ferrara, who found employment in Ancona as a clerk at the Ministry of Finance.<sup>62</sup> Considering the booming philatelic market in the second part of the nineteenth century, it is unsurprising that Camillo Moisé was also a modest stamp collector. As we learn from the *Almanacco Italiano*, at the time only five Italian cities had a Philatelic Circle, and three of them, Livorno, Venice, and Ancona, were trading cities (the other two were Rome and Milan).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Sacerdoti, 2003.

<sup>59</sup>Sacerdoti, 2003, 154.

<sup>60</sup>“Bonacossi, Marchesi, Conti, sec. XV”, in Sistema Informativo Unificato per le Soprintendenze Archivistiche (SIUSA).<http://san.beniculturali.it/web/san/dettaglio-soggetto-produttore?id=9022> . [accessed 20 April 2014].

<sup>61</sup>Francovich, 1969, vol. 11.

<sup>62</sup>Scardino and Torresi, 1999, 7. Camillo Moisé died in 1891. His origins and details about his parents and his family remain obscure.

<sup>63</sup>The philatelic market oriented towards the practice of collecting expanded exponentially generating in Italy a business volume in the range of millions of lira. At the end of the nineteenth century in Europe the Philatelic Societies numbered 278, in the US 117 and in South America. Soon after the invention of the first adhesive postal stamp the Penny Black in 1840, the auction market for this kind

Not much information about Alessandro Contini Bonacossi's youth in Ancona has survived. He was educated in classical studies, lost his father when he was thirteen years old, and lived with his mother, his brother Oscar (1881-1919?), and his sister Maria Pia (1884-1915) in his hometown until 1896, when he moved briefly to Milan.<sup>64</sup> (fig.1) There the philatelic market was thriving following the success of the first International Exhibition of Philately (held in 1894) and because of the brief presence in town of the very first Italian stamp dealer and philatelic journal owner, Count Giulio Cesare Bonasi. Born in Carpi, Bonasi later moved to Rome, where he opened an antique bookstore. It is likely that, because philately in Milan was growing from a connoisseur's specialty into a worldwide phenomenon, Alessandro decided to move there to transform his philatelic hobby into a real business. (fig.2) Alessandro met his wife, Erminia Vittoria Galli (1871-1949), in Milan, where she likely worked probably as a milliner.<sup>65</sup>(fig.3) According to an introductory note Contini Bonacossi wrote for the catalogue accompanying the 1930 exhibition in Rome of his Spanish painting holdings, his wife Vittoria played a big role in his success as a businessperson.<sup>66</sup>

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of collectible boomed. The very first stamp auction was held at the Hotel Drouot in Paris on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1865, followed by New York in 1870 and Sotheby's London in 1872.

<sup>64</sup>Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Antichità e Belle Arti, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258bis.

<sup>65</sup>The information about the origin of his fortune is the result of a combination of two different sources. The oral histories I was able to collect and record over the last nine years with his grandsons and granddaughters (now deceased) have been confirmed by a document I found in, ACS, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258bis. It is a *Curriculum Vitae* written and signed by Alessandro Contini Bonacossi himself presented to the Italian Government Officials during their investigations conducted after the World War II to clarify his position and dealings with the Germans.

<sup>66</sup>Longhi and Mayer, 1930, 1. Alessandro Contini Bonacossi wrote this introductory note for the first edition of the catalogue: "Roberto Longhi e August L. Mayer, i dotti compilatori di questo catalogo, hanno voluto nelle loro prefazioni rivolgere parole di lode alla mia appassionata attività di collezionista. Ed io sono molto grato, perché sicuro riconoscimento mi era difficile attendere. Per quanto io sappia che ogni forma di consenso a me rivolta investa anche la mia famiglia, pure nell'occasione della seconda edizione del catalogo, la quale ratifica il successo della mostra, sento il bisogno di precisare che questo riconoscimento è in gran parte dovuto a Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, mia moglie, che con rara sensibilità e con un amore che raggiunge i limiti di una vera religione, da lunghi anni affianca e conforta la mia diuturna fatica di raccoglitore".

Erminia Vittoria Galli (1871-1949) was the fourth daughter of humble laborers from Robecco d'Oglio, a small farm village in Cremona, in the north of Italy. Eight years older than her husband, she had a natural child in Cremona, Beatrice (1889-1914), or Bice, who later married Vittoria's brother-in-law, Alessandro's brother Oscar and gave birth to their son Alessandro Contini Bonacossi (1914-1976) later known as Sandrino. Her father was Faustino Giovita Galli, her mother Maria Feroldi. Born and raised in very humble circumstances, Vittoria Contini Bonacossi seems to have enjoyed a happy childhood; we can learn this in her memoirs written during her trips to America with her husband and addressed to her children.<sup>67</sup>

In 1898, the couple decided to move to Barcelona, where they married on 7 October 1899. Vittoria was a 28-year-old single mother, while Alessandro was 21.<sup>68</sup> (fig. 4). Barcelona was very important in philatelic circles on the Iberian Peninsula, as it had been home to the first Spanish stamp-trading venue, *Bolsa Filatelica*, between 1890 and 1892 (the first shop for collectors was owned by Jose Maria Verges, opening in 1854).<sup>69</sup> There, on 15 May 1899, Contini Bonacossi, under the name Alexandre Contini published the first issue of his philatelic magazine, *España Filatelica*, for which he served as both editor and publisher.<sup>70</sup>(fig. 5). As Joaquim Amado reported in a 2001 article in *Cronista Filatelico*,

Un'altra rivista molto caratteristica della fine del secolo va associata al suo pittoresco direttore, un italiano alto un metro e novantacinque che un bel giorno apparve a Barcellona accompagnato dalla moglie e cominciò a vendere e scambiare francobolli ed ad accumulare uno stock per lanciarsi nel commercio filatelico. Questo signore, che ben presto divenne molto popolare negli ambienti filatelici, si chiamava Alessandro Contini; affittò un locale in via Conde del Asalto e lì si stabilì come commerciante professionista nel 1898. L'anno dopo iniziò la pubblicazione di *España Filatelica*, una rivista in

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<sup>67</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 27.

<sup>68</sup>Most of the biographical information about Vittoria Galli and Alessandro Contini Bonacossi's early years are drawn from private documents in the Archivio di Famiglia, Capezzana, Prato, Italy. The marriage certificate is also available online through the Archivio Storico del Senato della Repubblica Italiana, Senatori dell'Italia Fascista. Fascicolo Personale. <http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.NSF/1dbf7f5088956bebc125703d004d5ffb/899c7b57b0ed8bfd4125646f005a67c2?OpenDocument> [accessed 20 Aprile 2016].

<sup>69</sup>Anguera, 2016.

<sup>70</sup>Aracil, 1993, 24.

cui apparvero undici numeri con testi ben selezionati, un'eccellente presentazione tipografica e annunci attraenti.<sup>71</sup>

Contini Bonacossi's selling motto 'to see and to judge' used on his magazine was transferred to the trading of art. His early interest in fine art and his connection to the artistic circles of Barcelona are proved by the choices he made for the *España Filatelica*. To illustrate his periodical, he employed the famous contemporary artist Enrique Serra y Auque (1859-1918), who also served as an illustrator for the Spanish magazine *Ilustración Española y Americana*.<sup>72</sup> Born in Barcelona, Serra y Auque lived for a long time in Paris and, in 1888, was honored with the Gold Medal of the Universal Exhibition in Barcelona.<sup>73</sup>

During these years, the family expanded. Contini Bonacossi's first son, Alessandro Augusto (1899-1994), was born in Barcelona. Two years later, they had a daughter, Elena Vittoria (1901-1962). Alessandro's mother Elena and his sister Maria Pia joined them in Barcelona (where his mother died in 1904), as well as Bice (fig.6-7).<sup>74</sup> Although the store they opened in Barcelona to sell and trade stamps experienced substantial success, in late 1903 Contini Bonacossi decided to move with his family to Madrid, where he opened a philatelic shop that became the *Maison Alexandre*.<sup>75</sup> (fig.8). This move came despite Alessandro's statement in his journal that Madrid was not a good market for selling stamps. The decision to move to the Spanish capital, quieter and more conservative than the bohemian Barcelona, could

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<sup>71</sup>The article is reported by Crevato Selvaggi, 2001, 35; See also Simonazzi, 2012, 8-10.

<sup>72</sup>Enrique Serra y Auque (1859-1918) was born in Barcelona where he later attended art school. Thanks to a scholarship, he was able to move to Rome in 1879 where he studied at the Accademia di San Luca. Soon, Serra established himself as a painter in Rome, recorded first sales success and received several commissions for the Vatican. In 1895 he opened a studio in Paris, which became a meeting point for young Spanish artists. As an illustrator for the Spanish magazine 'Ilustración Española y Americana' he gained further recognition. In 1888 he was honored with the Gold Medal of the Universal Exhibition in Barcelona, his works were shown at numerous exhibitions, including in the prestigious Sala Parés gallery in Barcelona. See: <https://auctionata.com/o/93655/enrique-serra-1859-1918-pontine-marshes-c-1900> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>73</sup>It was not unusual for contemporary artists to have a passion for old masters and to find them on the prowl of masterpieces, often working side by side with dealers, mediators, middle-men. As Jandolo recalls in his memoirs 'I primi clienti di papa erano artisti'. Jandolo, 1938, 31.

<sup>74</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258bis.

<sup>75</sup>Zeri, 1980; Papi, 1975.

lie in the political climate of Barcelona during that time, as we learn from Romero Maura in his article about the impact of terrorism on Spanish politics of the time. Barcelona by the 1890s had gained a reputation as a violent city.<sup>76</sup> Between 1904 and 1909, repeated acts of terrorism perpetrated by anarchists (backed by the Republican Party) wishing to assassinate the king made the city unsafe. These safety concerns and the political instability could have influenced Contini Bonacossi's decision to move his family and his business to Madrid.

In 1903 Contini Bonacossi and his wife Vittoria sailed to the United States with Boston as their destination. The immigration records for incoming passengers to Boston (1891-1909) at the US National Archives (NARA) in Washington, DC, show that Alessandro and Vittoria arrived on the cruise ship *Commonwealth*, having travelled "first saloon" (class), on 9 February 1903.<sup>77</sup> According to the records, Alessandro was a merchant, Vittoria a lady; both were listed as visitors, married and living in Barcelona. The lack of notes in the section used for recording previous visits to the United States could be evidence that this was the couple's first trip to the country. The purpose of this trip is unknown, but it could be linked to Boston's place in the story of American modernism; at the time, Harvard was the center of progressive thinking in the arts.

According to archival documentation at the State Archives in Rome, during his time in Madrid, in addition to his philatelic activities, Contini Bonacossi was also involved in an industrial business. In 1905, he appears to have founded Chemical Works LD, a firm that manufactured industrial and technical supplies. The business did well. He employed many selling agents, who placed his products all over Spain and Portugal. He secured for himself government contracts with public agencies, the Spanish Navy, and the emerging railroads. Contini Bonacossi expanded the business

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<sup>76</sup>Romero, 1968.

<sup>77</sup>"Massachusetts, Boston Passenger Lists, 1891-1943," database with images, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:23FZ-H85>), [accessed 17 March 2016], Vittoria Contini, 1903; citing Immigration, Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, United States, NARA microfilm publication T843, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

to South America as well, exporting products mainly to Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.<sup>78</sup> In the meantime, and probably because of the family business, his brother Oscar (now married to Vittoria's daughter Bice) moved to Argentina. In 1909 Contini Bonacossi decided to sell Chemical Works LD and to move back to Italy with his philatelic stock.<sup>79</sup>

Two main reasons could have contributed to this decision. One is patriotic and the other is economic. The first one might be linked to the frenetic activities in Italy, and Rome specifically, to plan "the Jubilee of the Nation." In 1905, Rome was busy organizing the International Exhibition of Art, a world fair, to be held in Rome in 1911, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of Italy. The main goal of the event was to offer a conceptual synthesis of the macro and micro identities of the country. The intention, prophetic for Contini Bonacossi's art business, was to celebrate the most prominent qualities of the Italian regions (the "piccole patrie") and, at the same time, to insert these local qualities into the general culture of the nation.<sup>80</sup>

The second one concerns the development of the international art market, with its centers in London and Paris, and the emergence of the United States as a major player and economic force in that market. During the post-World War One years, according to Reitlinger, the market for Old Masters works flourished and performed better than the market for modern art; the Old Masters works were considered a more conservative and less volatile investment. The Old Masters market was revived largely because of changing legal and tax codes, which helped disperse the private collections of wealthy landowners through the purchasing of art by the new social

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<sup>78</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258bis. This information regarding the founding of this company can be found in the documentation regarding Contini Bonacossi curriculum vitae in the State Archive in Rome. The information contradicts the general assumption that placed Contini Bonacossi as an employee in the Madrid branch of an American chemical company based in Chicago. The assumption, although reported in many sources, has never been documented and no evidence has ever put forward to confirm Contini Bonacossi's job on behalf of neither an American company nor the existence of an American company of this kind in Madrid.

<sup>79</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258bis.

<sup>80</sup>Querci, 2014.



class generated by the Industrial Revolution. In England the Settled Lands Act of 1882 freed British heirlooms to the art dealers' benefit and "made possible to trustees of settlements to sell off both land and chattels" precisely when America began to show its power as a nation able to buy at any price.<sup>81</sup> The emergence of the art dealer as a major player in the movement of artworks from Europe, as well as the acquisition of European artistic heritage by American collectors of the Gilded Age, was probably the most spectacular product of the Settled Lands Act. A few years later, the American congress passed the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, which abolished the import tax for works of art older than 50 years, allowing moneyed American collectors to start buying on a very different scale and to form outstanding private and public art collections on American soil.<sup>82</sup> There is no doubt that Contini Bonacossi was aware of this turbulence and decided to jump on the train.

Rome: 1909-1931

The chronology of Contini Bonacossi's presence in Italy after his Spanish sojourn has never been clarified. The documentation from the State Archive in Rome places Contini Bonacossi back in his motherland in 1909. He settled in Rome at Via Tevere 7 with his family and his lawyer, Francisco Alvarez de Jonti.<sup>83</sup> He soon became acquainted with the vibrant community of expatriate artists in Rome at the beginning of the last century. Indeed, it is likely that Alessandro himself commissioned his wife's portrait by Fernando Labrada (1888-1977). A Spanish artist living in Rome as a resident at the Royal Spanish Academy from 1909 to 1913, Labrada delivered the painting in 1911.<sup>84</sup>(fig. 9). As recalled by Pica in 1911, it was the Venetian

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<sup>81</sup>Reitlinger, 1961, 176; Rees, 1999.

<sup>82</sup>Literature on taxation and its historical development is a vast subject. Particularly abundant are essays and books on the ancient finance world. Relatively scarce are studies related to more recent times and especially meager is the literature exploring the relationship between the modern art market of the first half of the twentieth century. A general history of taxation and an extensive bibliography is offered by Webber and Wildavsky, 1986. Specific to the American scenario, see Netzer, 2006; Schuster, 2006; Barber, 2006.

<sup>83</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III 1929-1960, busta 258b.

<sup>84</sup>The painting was up for auction at Casa d'Aste Viscontea, Milano on 25 March 2015, lot. N. 297. From the catalogue: "Labrada Fernando - Nato a Periana (Malaga) nel 1888. Morto a Madrid nel 1977. La sua formazione ha inizio presso la Scuola di Belle Arti di Malaga. Grazie ad una pensione

International Exhibition, established in 1895, that led to Spanish painters -- at first Joaquín Sorolla, then Zuloaga and many more -- rapidly conquering the Italian taste for art, permeating the national visual culture, and generating much emulation.<sup>85</sup>

As we learn from an unpublished letter dated 27 January 1914 to Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1926), by that time Contini Bonacossi had already formed an art gallery and had perused auctions and dealers across Europe.<sup>86</sup> Writing in French, Contini Bonacossi invited Bode to visit his house in Rome, thus providing proof of his residence there and evidence of his artistic holdings. The relationship Contini Bonacossi had with Bode has remained unknown up to now, and evidence of their acquaintance and exchanges are brought to light by this research for the first time. Its relevance for Contini Bonacossi's dealing career will be discussed in the next chapter, as will the artworks in his gallery at this date. For now, it is important to note that Contini Bonacossi was confident enough to introduce himself to the powerful art historian Bode, describing himself as "a passionné amateur privé" who was proud of owning "une galerie assez important ou toutes les écoles sont représentées".<sup>87</sup>

It is interesting to note that, despite the presence of Bernard Berenson in Italy since 1900, Contini Bonacossi contacted Bode, who, as David Alan Brown pointed out in quoting René Gimpel, was "Berenson's deadliest enemy".<sup>88</sup> With this letter, Contini Bonacossi was certainly hoping to break into the international, and more specifically,

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statale nel 1909 si trasferisce a Roma. Nel 1913 si sistema a Madrid dove diventa professore della Scuola di Belle Arti e nel 1936 entra nella Reale Accademia di Belle Arti di San Fernando. Ha esposto le sue opere non solo in Spagna ma anche in Francia, Italia e Germania ottenendo numerose medaglie. Dipinto olio su tela "Vittoria Erminia Contini Bonacossi". Signed and dated 1911 on the lower right, framed. 59x98". I am grateful to Dr. Bresciani for bringing this lot to my attention. Also, as confirmed by the auction house, there were no customs stamps on the back of the painting. The absence may indeed indicate that the painting never left the country of production.

<sup>85</sup>Querci, 2014.

<sup>86</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode, 27 January 1914, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

<sup>87</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode, 27 January 1914, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

<sup>88</sup>Brown, 1996.

the American art market and museums. McClellan noted that Bode's notions were highly regarded in the US, as was German thinking about education and museum management and design more generally, which "formed an important resource for museum pioneers in the United States".<sup>89</sup>

During the same year, a tragedy struck the family: Beatrice (Vittoria's natural daughter) died giving birth to male twins while living in Argentina; her death was followed soon after by that of her husband Oscar. Only one boy survived, Alessandro Contini Bonacossi (1914-1976), known as Sandrino. He was unofficially adopted by Alessandro and Vittoria, respectively his uncle and his grandmother.<sup>90</sup> The philatelic activities continued in Italy and lasted until Contini Bonacossi's death in 1955. Two prestigious stamp purchases took place during these years. One was the acquisition of a huge stock from Dr. Achille Chiesa, whom he met in 1918, and of a stock from Madrid's Miguel Galvez, an internationally known philatelic dealer with whom Contini had already conducted business in 1904.<sup>91</sup>

It has been suggested that Contini Bonacossi was responsible for turning Achille Chiesa into a philatelic collector and subsequently into an art collector. The lack of literature on the art collection owned by Achille Chiesa and of monographic studies on his creator certainly does not help in clarifying the relationship that might have developed between the two during the years. Achille Chiesa's stock cards, if in existence, are not known to be available for public consultation. The Bode-Chiesa correspondence (1888-1889) from the State Archive in Berlin does not support this hypothesis though, as it shows Achille Chiesa was already an art collector when he met Contini. The correspondence also shows that Achille Chiesa was already trading art by 1888, when Contini Bonacossi was only ten years old. If it is likely that the trading of art took place between the two as both collectors/dealers linked by the

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<sup>89</sup>McClellan, 2008, 168.

<sup>90</sup>Sandrino will be the only member of the family to study art history under the guidance of the art historian Roberto Longhi (1890-1970), the Count's art advisor. In the Fifties, Sandrino will move to the US, first as part of the staff at the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation in New York, and subsequently to Washington DC as the Chief of the Photoarchive at the National Gallery of Art.

<sup>91</sup>The Bode-Chiesa correspondence (1888-1889), SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6;

double thread of art and philately, it is not yet possible to document any sales of works of art from Contini to Chiesa. Probably Contini Bonacossi bought a number of important paintings directly from Chiesa's son Achillito, in Rome, Milan or Siena, where, according to Papi, part of collection was stored.<sup>92</sup> Considering the difficulties that the auction house encountered in obtaining the export licenses that contributed to the underperformance of the sale, it seems likely that Contini bought the paintings in Italy and not in New York at the American Art Association when Chiesa's son put the collection up for auction through multiple sales between 1925 and 1930. The sale of the Chiesa collection, although very much publicized, was not successful and still stands as 'an unholy mess', the 'biggest fiasco' in the history of American Art Association.<sup>93</sup>

In the mid-1910s, Contini Bonacossi expanded his business to the United States thanks to his ties with the Anglo-American community in Rome. As explained in detail in the following chapter, his first contact with American collectors happened probably in 1911 through Durr Friedley (1889-193), a Harvard graduate from Indianapolis who was on a summer trip to Rome. Friedley was responsible for Contini Bonacossi's first American sales later in the decade and through the Norwegian-American sculptor Hendrick K. Andersen (fig. 11).

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During the Roman years, the Contini Bonacossi collection sparked the interest of internationally known art dealers and firms (like Duveen), as well as the attention of Italian government officials, who were certainly appalled and probably suspicious of this *ex-novo* collection and of the man who put it together. As we learn from archival sources from the Central State Archives in Rome, officials were worried about the possibly illicit nature of Contini Bonacossi's dealing.<sup>94</sup> Certain of finding proof of

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<sup>92</sup>Papi, 2014.

<sup>93</sup>On the Chiesa Sale at the American Art Association, see Watson, 1992, 215-218; and Towner, 1970, 382; 412. Towner, 382; 412.

<sup>94</sup>These sources are reported in Papi, 2014, 63-93. This essay, although reporting valuable unpublished correspondence among government officials regarding Contini Bonacossi's activities, fails to offer evidence in support of the allegations made throughout the essay on Contini Bonacossi's

his attempts to elude the recent laws for cultural protection, they visited his house in Rome on many occasions to check the legal status of his paintings. As reported by Laura Iamurri, these visits by government officials were indeed common practice at the time, as were the *escamotages* implemented by dealers and collectors to get around the rules. Bernard Berenson, Gustavo Frizzoni, and Aldo Nosedà (who encouraged his peers to “hide everything”) all received visits from government officials.<sup>95</sup> Shippers who knew how to work the system were used to facilitating their businesses. Sometimes this meant preferring one export office to another or using these offices’ connections.<sup>96</sup> The firms Egidi, Ciolli, and Stein (extensively used by Contini Bonacossi) were known to be particularly clever in implementing all export procedures.

To contextualize Contini Bonacossi’s activities in Rome, one must consider three factors: the state of the city’s art market at the turn of the century, the legislation that governed it, and the role of cultural institutions in shaping the city’s cultural identity. The state of the art market in Rome when Contini Bonacossi moved back there was flourishing. During the twentieth century, the art market in Rome was primarily concentrated on Via de’ Coronari, Via del Babuino, Via del Corso and Via Margutta, where most of the artists had their studios and most of the dealers had their warehouses.<sup>97</sup> The groundbreaking essays by Paolo Coen and his analysis of export licenses issued between 1873 and 1900 inform us of the volume and of the networks of people trading in Rome at that time.<sup>98</sup> According to Coen, in 1900 alone the *Ufficio Esportazione Oggetti d’Arte* of Rome granted 1827 export licenses, a

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illegal commerce. The author also quotes me as an author of an essay regarding Contini Bonacossi and Samuel Kress which I have never published, using it as a reference.

<sup>95</sup>Iamurri, 1996, 320; Iamurri, 2012, 393-406.

<sup>96</sup>Iamurri reports a letter by Gustavo Frizzoni to Berenson regarding a sale to John G. Johnson “Comment me degager dans mon affaire? Je n’ose pas présenter mes tableaux au bureau de Brera, parce que je suis sûr q’on me ferait des difficultés, on m’en nierait la permission de les faire sortir sans la permission de Rome. Nous avons ici un surintendant [Modigliani] horriblement exagéré dans la manière d’interpréter cette loi du socialisme de l’état”. Iamurri, 1996, 318.

<sup>97</sup>Jandolo, 1953.

<sup>98</sup>Coen, 2014, 285-304.

concrete indication of a healthy and flourishing market. As Augusto Jandolo reported, “a Roma non mancano certo compratori stranieri”.<sup>99</sup>

Legislation had a huge impact on the circulation of artworks and their economic value. A brief reference to the laws that governed the art market in Italy during 1909-39 can help us understand how prosperous the market was and how it was regulated. As Laura Iamurri reported, the cultural-protection law implemented at the beginning of the century (1902) by post-unification Italy was ineffective.

La legge (1902) non aveva destato alcuna preoccupazione nell’ambiente degli antiquari e dei collezionisti da tempo abituati a considerare un adempimento formale la richiesta dei permessi per l’exportazione di dipinti ed oggetti ed ad eludere sistematicamente i controlli di frontiera, dal resto quasi inesistenti.<sup>100</sup>

The 1902 law was then replaced in 1909 by the so-called *Legge Rava*, which introduced a more binding and restrictive *notifica permanente* for cultural artifacts (in the 1902 law, the *notifica* represented only a temporary lien). Government officials began visiting private collectors’ homes with the aim of establishing the legal presence of their artworks on national soil and to put the *notifica* on any artifact deemed of cultural interest for the nation. The permanent *notifica*, still in place in contemporary legislation, was intended as a tool for the government to prevent the smuggling of artworks outside of national borders, and also to keep track of changes in ownership. For all artifacts subject to the *notifica*, the owner was required to ask permission to sell from the Ministry of Public Education, even for transactions within national borders.<sup>101</sup>

Despite implementing these preventive measures, the government failed to reduce the flow of artworks from Italy that followed the boom of 1913(*anno mirabilis* for the market) and the bonanza of 1928. In his essays on export licenses in Rome, Coen alludes to how the newly formed Italian government exploited the nation’s cultural

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<sup>99</sup>Jandolo, 1938, 22. For the history of Italian legislation after the Unification of Italy, see Condemi, 1997, 31-40; Salvagnini, 2000.

<sup>100</sup>Iamurri, 1996, 320.

<sup>101</sup>Iamurri, 1996, 315-16. For the history of Italian legislation after the Unification of Italy, see Condemi, 1997.

heritage as a tool of cultural diplomacy and propaganda, a method also used by the Mussolini administration in the 1930s. Mussolini's regime took an accommodating approach towards enforcing export regulations designed to prevent the loss of Italian cultural property; this is confirmed by Salvatore Settis, who wrote that for 17 years, between the Croce Law (1922) and the Bottai Law (1939) Fascism did almost nothing to restrict its art exports.<sup>102</sup> This liberal approach, which became evident after the alliance with Nazi Germany, was of great benefit to the market, its players, and to the propaganda of authoritarian regimes.

The role of institutions in forming the first government museum system in Rome, capital of the newly born Kingdom of Italy, has yet to be fully analyzed; Paola Nicita's 2009 volume is the only comprehensive study to date on the birth of the Roman museum system and the cultural and political environment that made it possible.<sup>103</sup> Rome needed its cultural institutions to regain their former international cultural prestige, as well as serving its role as the capital of a modern, unified, secular state. More importantly (in this context), Rome after unification had no public *pinacoteche*, old or new, whose management was trusted by the government.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Settis, 2012. <http://www.ilgiornaledellarte.com/articoli/2012/10/114543.html> [accessed 7 March 2016].

<sup>103</sup>In the introduction to the volume, Marisa Dalai Emiliani offers a sharp summary of the Italian cultural environment at the time: "Quando Adolfo Venturi e con lui lo staff ancora ristretto della direzione generale delle belle arti, decise di creare una Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica, l'obiettivo era quello di dotare Roma di istituzioni museali di rilievo e di raggio nazionale. Tale programma rientrava in quel processo post-risorgimentale di costruzione ideologica della cultura nazionale unitaria che si era rafforzato con la presa di Roma. [...] Venturi si rese conto che la nuova apertura Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica a Palazzo Corsini aveva una fisionomia barocca, un carattere sbilanciato su un'epoca della storia artistica italiana ancora poco approfondito. Impossibile era quindi fare della Galleria Corsini un manuale della storia dell'arte italiana. Non è un caso quindi che il progetto di fondazione di un Museo del Medioevo e del Rinascimento esistesse già nel 1900 e che sarebbe poi stato perfezionato da Federico Hermanin inizialmente a Castel Sant'Angelo, poi a Palazzo Venezia". Dalai Emiliani, 2009, 8.

<sup>104</sup>According to Nicita, 2009, 38 : 'Al momento dell'unificazione del paese, nel 1870, Roma era l'unica città sprovvista di musei statali. A differenza delle altre città del Regno, dove lo Stato aveva ereditato le istituzioni culturali dei governi preunitari, nella Capitale i musei era di pertinenza del Papa con il complesso dei Musei Vaticani, e del Comune, da cui dipendevano i Musei Capitolini.' In 1875, the Direzione degli Scavi e Musei is founded (which in 1881 will become Direzione Generale di Antichità e Belle Arti) and a government program headed by the Ministry of Public Instruction in Rome with the intellectual support of Adolfo Venturi was launched. When Venturi was appointed General Inspector of the Belle Arti in 1888, he revitalized the rather traditional institution. The program Venturi was proposing was a vast reorganization of the galleries all over the Kingdom: "L'inventariazione degli oggetti d'arte, il controllo dello stato di conservazione, la compilazione di

As Cristian Brinton already pointed out in 1909, it has always been a complex process to discern how art business dealings unfold given the international nature of the art market c. 1900 and the European socio-political circumstances of the time.

Europe today offers the invigorating spectacle of an almost complete decentralization in manners esthetic. Not only are the larger countries in a sense independent of each other, but each state is in turn divided into districts where the painters of a given locality reflect with abundant zest the special characteristics of their surroundings. Throughout Germany, Italy, Russia, Belgium, Scotland, and Scandinavia and, to a broader extent, France itself, there are at present bands of fearless spirit who are enriching the great treasury of art with their sound and stimulating local as well as national flavor.<sup>105</sup>

According to Eugenia Querci, it was during the Romantic era (between the 19th and 20th centuries), with the type of literary historicism elaborated on by Hippolyte Taine, that national identity became influential in the art world, influenced by the rise of nationalism and its celebration of national culture. This cultural phenomenon of regionalism movements typical of the interwar years took place in the United States as well, as well argued in Robert Dorman's book *Revolt of the Provinces: the Regionalist Movement in America 1920-1945*. In Italy, nationalism also celebrated its many regional identities, entering deep into ancient popular traditions, rituals, and habits as matters of local and national essence. As Querci says:

All these elements can be summarized in a single word, Regionalism, which is a phenomenon typical of the Twentieth century that originates from the dialectical -sometimes-conflicting- relation between the human being and some crucial issues of modernity.<sup>106</sup>

A 1906 essay by Venturi's pupil Federico Hermanin (1868-1953), *Museo Romano del Medio Evo e del Rinascimento a Castel Sant'Angelo*, is one of the first official documents describing the project to create a national museum in Castel Sant'Angelo

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nuovi e moderni cataloghi. Parallelamente si doveva procedere al riallestimento delle gallerie. Era questo il programma completo che tendeva a trasformare il museo nell'ideale libro illustrato della storia artistica nazionale. La proposta veturiana si accompagnò alla richiesta di introdurre l'insegnamento della storia dell'arte nelle università, allo scopo di formare il primo nucleo di storici dell'arte cui affidare il compito di dirigere i musei".

<sup>105</sup>Brinton, 1909, 8.

<sup>106</sup>Querci, 2014, 25.



devoted to a specific period of Italian art.<sup>107</sup> The essay also demonstrates Hermanin's museological thinking, as well as trends of the time.<sup>108</sup> Hermanin envisioned a museum where one can find "*documenti della vita di ogni giorno accanto ai capolavori dell'arte, come in un grande quadro dove e possibile osservare tutto lo svolgimento della vita delle nostre popolazioni dopo la romanità*".<sup>109</sup> His intent was to overcome the traditional criteria for presenting art collections (proper to positivist museums) in order to create a setting in which one could follow the development of the different Italian schools from the 15th to the 18th centuries, to "*metter l'oggetto in una dimensione plausibile*".<sup>110</sup> Stressing the importance of historical relations between the diverse regional schools to deliver a message of a national dimension in Italian art was a key demand and therefore presenting the historical and stylistic affinities and mutual influences of Italian schools a priority.<sup>111</sup>

### **1925-1933.**

Around 1920-21, Contini Bonacossi moved out of Via Tevere 7 and bought and renovated a palazzo on the exclusive Via Nomentana 60, next door to Villa Torlonia, which a few years later (from 1925 to 1943) became Mussolini's residence. In 1928 the Jewish art critic Margherita Sarfatti, famous not only for being the founder of the artistic movement Novecento, but also for being Mussolini's mistress and intellectual advisor, moved to Via Nomentana with her collection of contemporary Italian art.<sup>112</sup> On 23 May 1923, the renowned portraitist Leonetta Cecchi Pieraccini (1882-1977) recorded in her memoirs her presence at one of the famous *soirées* Contini Bonacossi hosted at his house on Via Nomentana.

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<sup>107</sup>Hermanin, 1906.

<sup>108</sup>Nicita, 2009, 270.

<sup>109</sup>Nicita, 2009, 271.

<sup>110</sup>Ruggeri Tricoli, 2000, 3.

<sup>111</sup>The examples Hermanin was following for the display of the collections at Castel Sant'Angelo were the Musée des Monuments Français, the Musée de Cluny in France and in Italy the Museo Correr and of course the Kaiser Friedrich created by Bode in 1904.

<sup>112</sup>Cannistraro and Sullivan, 1993, 328.

Da tempo si parla a Roma, o meglio in Italia, della collezione d'arte dei conti Contini Bonacossi; I quali hanno radunato con mezzi di eccezionale potenza, una raccolta di strabilianti opere di tutte le epoche e di tutti i paesi. Stasera le sale della villa che le contengono sono state aperte ad un folto pubblico di invitati. I fortunati proprietari ricevono con generosa amabilità. La vivace e tarchiata contessa Vittoria alza ogni tanto la testa verso il gigantesco marito, dignitoso e riservato come un gentiluomo di corte (vedete? Gli arrivo al cuore al mio Nano, ella dice) [...] Si racconta che pur essendo priva di ogni coltura specializzata, ella abbia un intuito formidabile per identificare le opera d'arte di merito, e un coraggio temerario per acquistarle. Intanto, per un religioso sentimento di riverenza e gratitudine verso gli antichi maestri, ella fa dire delle messe in suffragio delle loro anime benedette. Un po' più in là si profila la testa corvina di Roberto Longhi con gli occhi miopi socchiusi e apparentemente distratti; invece attenti e pungentissimi.<sup>113</sup>

Contini Bonacossi's art gallery was growing day by day, and it soon became a must-see, building a national reputation and receiving international acclaim.

The 1920s were indeed filled with intense acquisitions campaigns for Contini Bonacossi. He was fully committed to creating a private collection of museum size and scope. In his letter to Bode dated 9 January 1924, Contini Bonacossi wrote (again, no mention of trading even though at this date he was already an active dealer as explained further below):

In quest'ultima quindicina ho fatto ancora delle pesche interessantissime [...]. Come vede continuo con costanza ed un certo coraggio nell'attuazione del mio sogno di rendere la mia collezione qualche cosa di degno e unico in Europa, almeno nel campo privato.<sup>114</sup>

A year after this letter, in 1925, Benito Mussolini, proclaiming himself as Duce, declared the fascist dictatorship at the Italian parliament and, as mentioned, moved door to Contini Bonacossi. Fascism exploited the power of the visual arts -- theatre, cinema, architecture, fine arts -- at every turn. The Fascist government used cultural artifacts to make every social class conscious of Italy's cultural heritage. As Medina Lasansky pointed out, this fusion of the past with the present was made in order to

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<sup>113</sup>Cecchi Pieraccini, 1960, 142. The quote is also reported by Mannini et al, 2011, 136. Leonetta Cecchi Pieraccini was a painter and Emilio Cecchi's wife (1884-1966).

<sup>114</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode, 9 January 1924, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304. 6.6.1.

create a national cultural identity and to preserve and promote Italianità (Italianess) and a pure Italian culture.<sup>115</sup> Cultural diplomacy was a key feature of Italian foreign policy in the late '20s and early '30s. It was one of the most important propaganda tools for the Fascist regime outside of Italy, especially in the United States.<sup>116</sup> Since the very early years of the regime, Contini Bonacossi caught the attention of Il Duce, who probably saw the dealer as a potential cultural mediator to the United States and whose private acquaintances overseas he could exploit.<sup>117</sup> Contini at this time was already a well-known art dealer in Europe and in the United States. His US network, which he had built up since his first US trip (in 1903), consisted both of prominent members of the American financial élite and Italian-American millionaires. No doubt Mussolini thought of Contini Bonacossi as the right man at the right time in being instrumental to his goal of cultivating friendships with Americans overseas (and not only Americans that visited or resided in Italy) through more informal channels. It is still unclear when the Count officially joined the Fascist party and unknown if his wife Vittoria joined too. According to the documents from the historical archive of the Senato della Repubblica Italiana, Contini Bonacossi took the oath to become an official member of the Fascist Party in 1925, while according to the documents at the Archivio di Stato in Rome, he joined in 1932. Before 1932, Contini Bonacossi was actively involved in philanthropic activities, making numerous gifts and donations to the nation, which continued until his death on 20 October 1955.<sup>118</sup> Among his most

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<sup>115</sup>Lasanski, 2004; Erezin, 1997; Lazzaro and Crum, 2005; Carletti and Giometti, 2016.

<sup>116</sup>Pretelli, 2008; Pretelli, 2006; Cassels, 1964; De Capraris, 2000. During the mid '20s, the *Fasci di Combattimento*, *Combat Fasci*, was a fascist political organization supporting the Fascist doctrine outside of Italy and especially popular among the Italian community in America. Between 1922 and 1925 the *Fasci* and the enthusiasm in the US and in the UK for Italian culture enjoyed a solid growth. In 1924 the Italian Institutes of Culture were established and the Italian Academy at Columbia University in New York became a cultural outpost for Italian studies. Around 1927, it collapsed when the US Department of State dissolved the organization, proclaiming it illegal.

<sup>117</sup>The literature devoted to the relationship between Italy and the United States during the years of Fascism is abundant. For this study I found useful the following books: Diggins, 1972; Diggins, 1996; Gidaro and Zannuttini, 2002: 1314-bis; Anderson, 1938:347-348; Ben-Ghiat, 1996: 293-316; Vaudagna, 1975: 764-96; Yandell Elliot, 1938:162-169 and of course Migone (1971) and (1980).

<sup>118</sup>A list of all his gifts can be found at ACS, AABBA, Div. II, 1929-1960, b. 258bis

important gifts were those to Castel Sant'Angelo (planned since 1926 and formalized in 1928) and to the Duce himself in 1929 (a coin and medal collection).<sup>119</sup>

Given the many enthusiastic comments about the political situation in her motherland and its leader (“Stellone d’Italia”, “siamo più rispettabili da che abbiamo Mussolini”) contained in his wife’s memoirs from the 1920s, it is reasonable to concord with the Senate papers and it would be fair to think of his fascist creed more as a nationalistic creed of Risorgimental origins.<sup>120</sup> Over the 1920s he was acknowledged with several honorific titles and was appointed as a Senator of the Kingdom of Italy on 13 November 1939 for the merits of his antiquarian activities.<sup>121</sup> What is sure is that he remained a member until 1943, when the party was dissolved and Mussolini overthrown.<sup>122</sup>

Documentation at the National Archives in College Park (NARA) describes Contini Bonacossi as a financial advisor for Mussolini. My research at this stage struggles to provide any documentary evidence to substantiate Contini Bonacossi working officially for the Regime on financial matters. Yet a reference I found in a letter he

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<sup>119</sup>The Contini gift received a lot of attention in Italian, European and American newspapers. One of the most positive and appropriate reviews of the event is Venturi 1928,110. He stressed the accent on the purpose of the gift, which was the furnishing of empty rooms of the National Museum of Castel Sant'Angelo and not the creation of a Gallery devoted to the history of Italian painting. He wrote- “Contini’s gift shows a high degree of sophistication. The Count chose and displayed the objects and works of art according to their aesthetic values rather than the art historical ones. The fact that these objects are not part of the original set of Paolo III’s apartment, it is not relevant at all. The Contini Gift is a superb kick-off for the National Museum of Castel Sant’Angelo, as a museum of Art and Crafts at the most high quality”. On the gift of the numismatic collection, Fioravanti, 1990, 68-207.

<sup>120</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2017, 46, 48, 53, 74, 94, 153, 167, 183, 206, 208, 232, 258, 282, 283, 333.

<sup>121</sup>The titles are: Knight of the Crown of Italy on 28 December 1922; Official of the Order of the Knights of the Crown of Italy on 19 June 1924; Commendatore of the Order of the Knight of the Crown of Italy on 2 January 1926. , Final Report by the Art Looting Investigation Unit of the OSS relating to jewels, paintings, and other art objects appropriated during WWII. NARA, RG 239, M1782, 163. Online through Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/image/232006570>. [last accessed 3 January 2018].

<sup>122</sup>Archivio Storico del Senato della Repubblica Italiana, Senatori dell’Italia Fascista, available online. [http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.nsf/All/899C7B57B0ED8BFD4125646F005A67C2/\\$FILE/0630%20Contini%20Bonacossi%20Alessandro%20fascicolo.pdf](http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.nsf/All/899C7B57B0ED8BFD4125646F005A67C2/$FILE/0630%20Contini%20Bonacossi%20Alessandro%20fascicolo.pdf); <http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.NSF/1dbf7f5088956bec125703d004d5ffb/899c7b57b0ed8bfd4125646f005a67c2?OpenDocument#>; [last accessed 10 October 2017]. ACS, AABBA, Div. II, 1929-1960, b. 258bis.

wrote to Bode on 23 November 1926 confirms the Italian government appointed him to a “special role” in the United States. Contini Bonacossi informs Bode about what motivated the trip to the US he was about to take:

Noi Andiamo in America con un incarico speciale del nostro governo ed approfitteremo della nostra permanenza per studiarci i musei e le collezioni private che ancora non conosciamo.<sup>123</sup>

It was not possible to document at this stage what this special duty was although some historical considerations can be emphasized in order to understand why Mussolini picked Contini Bonacossi for what it seemed like an important purpose (as art dealers were countless in Rome and Mussolini had a wide choice of options) and why Contini Bonacossi accepted the risk to mingle at this high level of Italian politics. The second part of the question is obvious: Contini Bonacossi’s personal interest and convenience for his business. The dealer simply understood that boosting his reputation and winning the favor of the government could favor his business and the exchange of works of art between the two countries. Moreover, commanding a position of power and influence in the Italian government was part of his strategy to reinforce his reputation and credibility, especially to an international audience that, as is well known, admired Mussolini’s politics in its very early stages.

To understand why the Duce picked Contini Bonacossi, we need to have a brief look at the political and diplomatic –if any- relationships between the United States and Italy during the 1920s using the studies on the relationship between the United States and Italy during the interwar years by John Diggins and by Gian Giacomo Migone (1971) and (1980). Migone’s studies in particular are crucial to clarify how Contini Bonacossi’s important American clientele (for the large part Jewish financiers like Sachs, Warburg, Kahn) fit with his involvement in the Fascist party as they analyze the support and the enduring relationship between the American financial establishment and Fascist Italy up until 1935 (Mussolini’s conquest of Ethiopia). As Migone argued:

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<sup>123</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode, 23 November 1926, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

There was an American foreign policy, even in the isolationist 1920s. It was not only executed and discreetly supported by the government and its official diplomacy, but it was taken in fact over by the bankers who were filling a vacuum of power as justified by the small government, laissez faire ideology dominating the “Republican Twenties”.<sup>124</sup>

Mussolini knew that building a relationship with the United States, the then up and coming most important economic power in the world, was of primary importance for his regime. A good relationship with the American financial élite was key, as well as to portray a positive image of Italy as a country of “order, tranquility”, as Il Duce wrote to the Italian Ambassador to the US Gelasio Caetani in 1923.<sup>125</sup>

It is interesting to note that, at least at this stage, Contini Bonacossi’s Jewish origins did not seem to be a matter of concern for the Italian political environment. From this point of view, he was not unique, as the case of Guido Jung also demonstrates. The question of the degree of copenetration between Jews and Fascists still awaits a full and honest investigation, as Raspagliesi reports in her attempt to explain Jung’s career.<sup>126</sup> As we have seen, Mussolini and his administration seemed more interested in opening unofficial diplomatic channels between Italy and the American élite, especially financial, and in taking advantage of Contini Bonacossi’s personal and business relationships by exploiting his very special allure, which was unique among art dealers, for ideological ends instrumental to his idea of Italianità.

With the exception of the Panna estate, which Contini Bonacossi purchased in the ‘30s, properties in the Tuscan countryside were acquired at the beginning of the previous decade; two became instrumental during and after World War II: *Capezzana* (acquired probably in the mid 1920s) and *Trefiano*. His activities as winemaker and landowner are little known as they were mainly deferred to his son Alessandro Augusto.<sup>127</sup> Contini Bonacossi himself discussed these secondary

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<sup>124</sup>Migone, 1980, 26.

<sup>125</sup>Migone, 1980, 96.

<sup>126</sup>Raspagliesi, 2012, 201.

<sup>127</sup>Typed manuscript from 1941 by Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, *Perizia estimativa delle tenute di proprietà del N.H. Conte senatore Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, Libro I : parte generale e perizia della tenuta di Capezzana (Capezzana-Trefiano-Poggetto); and Libro II: parte generale e perizia delle tenute (S. Gemignanello-Groppoli-Panna)*. Academia dei Georgofili Library, Florence.

activities when, after World War II, in 1944, he found himself at the center of the Italian government's investigation into sales by Italian art dealers to Nazi officials. In the case of Contini Bonacossi, this Nazi official was Hermann Goering (1893-1946) (see later in the chapter for details). Indeed it was not by chance that his US Immigration Card from 1948, when Contini Bonacossi visited the US sailing from Southampton for the first time without his wife, declared him to be a 'landowner' and not the usual business owner or merchant. His activity as landowner was also used to support his 1939 appointment as a senator.

Bonificatore di vaste terre di sua proprietà le ha dotate di igieniche case coloniche impiantandovi la cultura razionale della vite. Ha donato allo Stato Italiano importanti opere d'arte ed ha acquistato numerosi capolavori di maestri del quattrocento e del cinquecento esulati all'estero al principio del secolo scorso restituendoli al patrimonio artistico nazionale.<sup>128</sup>

During the twenty years Contini Bonacossi spent in Rome, he established himself as a key player in Italian culture and politics and as an important international art dealer. During these fertile decades, Contini Bonacossi's reputation as a respectable art dealer gained ground in the US. His US immigration records (held at NARA) show a frantic travel schedule: between 1903, his first documented American trip, and 1954, his last, Contini Bonacossi visited the United States ten times (1926, 1927, 1929, 1932, 1933, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1948, and 1950), mostly for business. Records of his coinciding sales to American collectors provide further evidence of these trips. The Immigration Bureau recorded no entries between 1939 and 1947, a pause clearly due to World War II and its aftermath. Only three trips are recorded after the war, in 1948, in 1950, and 1954.<sup>129</sup> In the 1930s, Contini Bonacossi and his wife sailed regularly to the United States, almost every year, spending not less than three months at a time there. As Contini Bonacossi's wife noted in her diary about their 1933 trip to the US, the couple spent most of their lives travelling the world:

Con questa sono venuta qui cinque volte, una trent'anni fa, l'altra sei anni fa, tre anni fa, l'anno scorso, ed ora. All'Argentina siamo stati ventiquattro anni orsono, due viaggi in undici mesi e dire due andare e due a ritornare;

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<sup>128</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. II, 1929-1960, b. 258bis.

<sup>129</sup>Contini Bonacossi took these last trips without his wife, who died in 1949.

conosciamo oltre a Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Santa Fe, ed altre piccole città. Anche in Brasile, Rio de Janeiro, San Paulo, Santos, in Uruguay pure siamo stati. Abbiamo viaggiato parecchio, dell'Europa centrale ci manca la Russia".<sup>130</sup>

The geographic isolation caused by the war slowed down Contini Bonacossi's sales overseas, but it did not completely stop the trade with Kress; as sales in 1939 and 1941 were finalized (as explained in greater detail in the fourth chapter). As we learn from Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's diary, while in New York, the couple rented an entire floor of the St. Regis, Plaza, or Pierre hotels. They came from Italy with crates full of objets d'art and hundreds of photographs, hoping to sell them or to trade for better artworks. Among the most notable collectors were Jules S. Bache (1861-1944), Philip Lehman (1861-1947), and Otto Kahn (1867-1934), who was also a client.<sup>131</sup> Contini Bonacossi's wife wrote detailed reports on the collections of these men; the reports offer a vivid and extraordinary account of those collections well before catalogues were published.<sup>132</sup> They also shed light on Contini Bonacossi's taste and interests. These visits to the US informed his taste for contemporary housing, which was reflected in Contini Bonacossi's new Villa in Florence, where the couple moved at the beginning of the 1930s.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>This diary has not been published in 2007. All the manuscripts, including this one, have been donated by the Contini Bonacossi heirs to the Archivio per la Memoria e la Scrittura delle Donne at the Archivio di Stato in Florence where they are available for public consultation. See Manno Tolu, 2011.

<sup>131</sup>Jules Bache lived at 10 East 63rd street in New York City and was a client as explained in more details in the next chapter. The first catalogue of the Jules Bache Collection was published in 1929. The collection was later sold at Kende Galleries in 1945. Jules, Semon Bache, Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America, <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6536> [accessed 10 October 2017].

<sup>132</sup>Philip Lehman, Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America, <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6752>. [accessed 10 October 2017]. Philip Lehman was not a client, as so far no transactions with Contini Bonacossi can be documented. He was part of the vast Contini Bonacossi network and one of the finest collectors of early Italian painting in America. His collection was later expanded by his son Robert to include French paintings of the 19th and 20th centuries. It was donated in 1954 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it still is accessible, displayed according to historical period. Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's report from 17 January 1927 is of high interest as it recalls the collection; her report came before the additions of Lehman's son Robert and before the catalogue, written by Robert, that was published in 1928. It informs us about Lehman's pioneering taste for Primitive art, a genre he was able to buy at low prices because it was not yet in high demand. Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 100.

<sup>133</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 101-104. According to her recollection from 18 January 1927 she seemed to have been particularly impressed by the criteria Kahn adopted for displaying his collection.



Among museums they visited during their trip to the US are the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Frick Collection in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Detroit, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Art Institute in Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Cleveland, and the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo. In Boston they visited and conducted business with the trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, and the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum. In Philadelphia they visited the Johnson Collection, in Baltimore the Walters.

In February 1927, only two years before the Wall Street crash, the business relationship between Samuel Henry Kress (1863-1955) and Contini Bonacossi began.<sup>134</sup> This relationship lasted until their deaths, which occurred in the same year, one month apart. The Great Depression still stands as the greatest tragedy in American and world economic history. For three years (1929-31), the economy pointed inexorably downward.<sup>135</sup> However, as argued by Barber, the consumption of luxury goods and philanthropic activities, despite the increased welfare state, did not suffer any decline.<sup>136</sup> Like many philanthropists of his time, Samuel Henry Kress set up his Foundation in 1929.

Florence: 1933-1955

If the 1920s represented Contini Bonacossi's coming of age as a prominent art dealer, the 1930s were his years of affirmation. As explored, Contini Bonacossi

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Otto Herman Kahn (1867-1934), a Jewish-German immigrant, was one of the most prominent New York collectors and philanthropists of the time. He lived on Fifth Avenue, in an Italian Renaissance-style *palazzo* designed by Stenhouse to house his collection. His approach seems to have been a discovery for her, a concept that she could employ in their new residence in Florence. On the Kahn residence: Kathrens, 2005, 341. Otto H. Kahn, Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America. <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6735> [access 10 October 2017].

<sup>134</sup>A good survey for the history of the stock market during the Depression in the US and in Europe can be found here: [http://blogs.thisismoney.co.uk/this\\_is\\_money\\_blog/the\\_great\\_depression/index.html](http://blogs.thisismoney.co.uk/this_is_money_blog/the_great_depression/index.html). Dan Hyde's Great Depression blog series looks in detail at the effects of the 1929 crash on people's lives and what was done to try to end the crisis. [Access 19 December 2017].

<sup>135</sup>Mitchell, 1947.

<sup>136</sup>Barber, 1999.

fashioned alliances with Italian politicians and powerful Italian-Americans; these alliances surely helped him to achieve his goal of becoming a key figure in the international art market.<sup>137</sup> In 1933 Contini Bonacossi officially relocated to Florence.<sup>138</sup> We do not know the reasons for this decision, but it appears to have been strategic and it could be related to the changing political climate in Italy as well as the change of heart of the United States regarding the direction Mussolini's politics were taking (for example, Abyssinian and Ethiopian expansion). Contini Bonacossi in the early 1930s decided to move to Florence, a city with a great tradition in the commercial art world and popular destination for wealthy Americans. In doing so, he probably hoped to relax Mussolini's grip on him without seemingly deteriorating his relationship with the Italian dictator. This proved to be a highly successful move for Contini. His presence in Florence allowed him to tighten his connection with Bernard Berenson; and probably, being half Jewish, saved his life when the racial laws were approved by the Fascist Government at the dawn of the Second World War. Historically, Florence had been adopted by foreign collectors and dealers, such as Frederick Stibbert and Herbert Horne, as well as scholars, such as Bernard Berenson and Charles Loser.<sup>139</sup> For his *casa-galleria*, Contini Bonacossi chose a fairly new neoclassical building with an illustrious provenance in the center of Florence.<sup>140</sup> A history of the building, along with an analysis of the photographic documentation of Contini Bonacossi's residency there, was first published by Alessandro Lazzeri and Enrico Colle in 1995 and more recently in the catalogue of the Contini Bonacossi collection at the Uffizi Gallery just published (2018).<sup>141</sup> Thanks to Lazzeri's contribution, we know that the villa was commissioned by Marquess Carlo Strozzi to the architect Girolamo Passeri and completed between 1886-1891. The neoclassical

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<sup>137</sup>Most of these connections in America are mentioned in V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007.

<sup>138</sup>Florence is recorded on the Immigration records related to Contini Bonacossi and his wife starting in 1933. Until 1932, the official place of residence is still recorded as Rome.

<sup>139</sup>The literature regarding the influence of these collectors on dealers on the market of the city so largely studied. For an in-depth study on the art market in Florence during the first thirty years after the Italian Unification, Bertelli, 2011.

<sup>140</sup>The building is still in place and it was turned into the Florence Convention Center in 1964, when the city acquired the villa from Contini Bonacossi's heirs. Colle and Lazzeri, 1995.

<sup>141</sup>Colle and Lazzeri, 1995,11-76.La collezione Contini Bonacossi nelle Gallerie degli Uffizi, 2018.

villa --a property of more than eight hundred and forty square meters-- had forty-seven rooms and was located in a premiere location in the middle of a vast park. (fig.12).The building included a basement, three upper floors and attics. It was equipped with the most modern amenities of the time. It had all the features of a typical *fin de siècle* house. The wooden ceilings and the doors were exquisite, carved by the best artisans of the time.<sup>142</sup>The renovation work took two years and was directed by Vittoria. The furnishings and the interior décor of the villa showed a highly sophisticated and modern taste. Luxurious materials were used, and modern American appliances and fixtures (such as elevators and electricity in every room as well as indoor plumbing) were rare innovations in Italy, even among the wealthiest Italians (fig 13-14). Villa Vittoria (named after his wife) seemed to fit perfectly Berenson's quote:

La casa è espressione delle necessità, dei gusti, dei desideri di chi la abita e le opere d'arte e i mobili che articolano gli spazi non fanno altro che esaltarne la funzione: organismo vivente, essa respira e si muove al ritmo della vita umana, la intensifica e la completa.<sup>143</sup>

Contini Bonacossi's frequent visits to New York tycoons' homes refreshed his ideas on collecting and display. The Countess was profoundly impressed by the American homes she visited (for example those of the Warburgs, Kahns, and Wideners) for their wise harmony of luxury, modernity, and comfort. To achieve similar results, the Contini Bonacossi commissioned the restoration of the villa residence to the two most avant-garde architects on the Italian scene: Tommaso Buzzi (1900-1981) and Gio Ponti (1891-1979). Their work is universally recognized as the birth of Italian contemporary design. As Federico Zeri said in his writings about Villa Vittoria:

Forse il segreto della collezione Contini Bonacossi a Villa Vittoria, consisteva nel presentare i capolavori in un'atmosfera lussuosa ma accogliente, *gemütlich*, nelle sale tenute perfettamente in ordine e abbellite da masse di fiori... a loro merito va l'aver saputo utilizzare quegli spazi sì da presentare quadri, statue e mobili con una fruibilità che pochi musei possono vantare: perfette le luci, giusti gli spazi, indovinati i colori delle pareti, bellissime le

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<sup>142</sup>Colle-Lazzeri, 1995,15.

<sup>143</sup>Trotta, 2003, 232.

cornici, con un accento originale, inconfondibile di gusto scrupoloso e smorzata solennità.<sup>144</sup>

In 1933 Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) became Chancellor of the Republic of Germany; a few months later, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) was elected President of the United States. According to Cannistraro-Sullivan, during his second official visit to Rome in 1932, Hermann Goering, Hitler's principal liaison with the Italian Fascists, was introduced to Contini Bonacossi through Margherita Sarfatti (1880-1961).<sup>145</sup> As will be discussed later in detail, this connection developed into a business deal that lasted one year (1941-42); right after the war, this caused Contini Bonacossi to be accused of collaboration with the Nazis, though the accusation was later dropped. Considered by many controversial, the deal should be examined through the lens of its time.

As Contini Bonacossi stated:

bisogna riportarsi all'ambiente di quel periodo per comprendere come fosse tutt'altro facile, in particolar modo se eri una persona in vista, opporsi alla volontà dei tedeschi.<sup>146</sup>

On 9 May 1938, Hitler visited Florence as part of his official trip to Italy.<sup>147</sup> The beginning of the Second World War severed ties between European dealers. Contini Bonacossi's business with overseas clients came to a halt. Of necessity, Italian dealers relied on the only clients available at the time.

### ***1939-1943. War World II and the Sales to Goering***

Già nell'inverno del 1942 il maresciallo Goering era arrivato a Firenze accolto con onori regali dagli antiquari più noti. I più solenni antifascisti dell'antiquariato, che avevano visto crollare tutti i loro affari con il mondo

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<sup>144</sup>Zeri, 1995, 9-10.

<sup>145</sup>Cannistraro-Sullivan, 1993, 234.

<sup>146</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III, 1929-1960, busta 258-258bis

<sup>147</sup>Archivio Storico del Comune di Firenze, "Firenze 9 Maggio 1938. Il Ritorno all'Ordine. L'immagine di Firenze per la visita del Führer", in *I Quaderni dell'Archivio della Città*, 1:2012, [http://www.ext.comune.fi.it/archivistorico/documenti/quaderni/Quaderno\\_1/9\\_Maggio\\_1938](http://www.ext.comune.fi.it/archivistorico/documenti/quaderni/Quaderno_1/9_Maggio_1938). [access 4 September 2016].

anglosassone, di colpo divennero filo tedeschi ed ebbero commendatizie per gli uffici delle SS.<sup>148</sup>

Although his partnership with the Nazi party official Hermann Wilhelm Goering (1893-1946) was short-lived and exclusive (as the Italian dealer did not entertain business with any other member of the Nazi party), it had a lasting negative impact on Contini Bonacossi's life and reputation.<sup>149</sup> Because of Contini Bonacossi's association with Goering his name was placed on the "red-flag" lists when the issue of World War II provenances surfaced among American museums in the late 1990s, and for any museum with a work of art that had passed through Contini Bonacossi this became a matter of concern. The available sources document varying circumstances in which Contini Bonacossi and Goering first met. As mentioned earlier, Cannistraro and Sullivan reported that the first contacts between them took place in Rome in 1932 through Margherita Sarfatti, but no transactions can be found that document this first meeting.<sup>150</sup> Contini Bonacossi himself explains how he met Goering in a letter from 26 September 1944 to the president of the Italian Senate, Prince Piero Tomasi della Torretta.

Fin dal 1941 fui avvicinato da un rappresentante del maresciallo Goering perché gli cedessi alcuni dei miei oggetti d'arte. Per oltre un anno rifiutai di aderire a questa mia richiesta, ma dopo un viaggio del maresciallo a Roma, le pressioni presero un atteggiamento coercitivo al punto che non vi era altra scelta che alienare il meno possibile, in ogni caso le cose meno significative della mia raccolta. Oltre a ciò, i quadri a lui ceduti erano stati acquistati all'estero e fruivano della temporanea importazione: non rappresentavano perciò una sottrazione al presente patrimonio artistico italiano.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Siviero, 1984, 41.

<sup>149</sup>For more information on the so-called Washington Principles, see the regulations by State Department of the United States. As we learn from Consolidated Interrogation Report (CIR), # 2, 107 the Goering Collection, it is quite certain that Contini Bonacossi never sold anything to other German officials, Hitler included. Indeed, Posse received special instruction not to approach the Count for art purchases, as reported in CIR #2: Reports by the Art Looting Investigation Unit of the OSS relating to jewels, paintings, and other art objects appropriated during WWII. NARA RG 239, M1782, CIR#2. And also, Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, 1943-1946. NARA, RG 239, Roll: 0094. M1944. Online through Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/image/231999972>; <https://www.fold3.com/image/270235939>. [access 17 April 2017].

<sup>150</sup>Cannistraro-Sullivan, 1995, 231.

<sup>151</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div. III, 1929-1960, busta 258-258bis.

The archival materials at NARA add more details, confirming that Contini Bonacossi met Goering in Rome in 1941.<sup>152</sup> Contini Bonacossi got in touch with Goering through Walter Andreas Hofer (1893-1971), Goering's personal art advisor. Hofer was introduced to Contini Bonacossi by Gottlieb F. Reber (1880-1959), a well-known German art collector and occasional dealer who lived in Rome between 1941 and 1947. Reber apparently had known Contini Bonacossi before the war. According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art website, Reber scouted the Italian art market for his long-time acquaintance and former assistant Hofer, who had been Reber's employee between 1930 and 1934.<sup>153</sup> Thanks to Nancy Yeide's volume about the Goering collection, we can identify the pieces that Contini Bonacossi sold to Goering, as well as their sources, and understand the circumstances in which the sales took place.<sup>154</sup> The list of objects (with accompanying prices) produced by the American Army includes forty-nine art objects purchased from Contini Bonacossi by Andreas Hofer on behalf of Goering through Reber (who apparently, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art entry was getting the ten percent on all the sales from Contini Bonacossi). The nine transactions, all documented between 1 December 1941 and 18 December 1942, were extremely lucrative for Contini Bonacossi.<sup>155</sup> According to Yeide, there is no evidence that any of the forty-nine objects sold (of which fifteen were paintings, sold in two transactions) were looted.<sup>156</sup> Most of the paintings Contini Bonacossi sold to Goering, all but three, had

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<sup>152</sup>Reports by the Art Looting Investigation Unit of the OSS relating to jewels, paintings, and other art objects appropriated during WWII. NARA RG 239, M1782, CIR#2., 107. For a complete description of these sources see Yeide, 2009, 23.

<sup>153</sup>This entry reports also on bibliographical details related to Reber. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/leonard-lauder-research-center/programs-and-resources/index-of-cubist-art-collectors/reber>, [access 17 April 2017].

<sup>154</sup>Reports by the Art Looting Investigation Unit of the OSS relating to jewels, paintings, and other art objects appropriated during WWII. NARA RG 239, M1782, CIR#2. NARA M1782. 31 March 2016].

<sup>155</sup>Goering's willingness to buy at any price was not enough to satisfy Contini Bonacossi's appetite for business, for the thrill of negotiating the best deal possible. As we learn from Hofer's deposition about Contini Bonacossi and his dealings with Goering, the Count was the biggest figure on the art market during the war. Hofer stated that in his dealings with Goering, Contini bargained so much that Hofer 'had to work out a regular method by which he always offered a given percentage below what was asked and eventually came to an agreement somewhere half way between his price and what Contini wanted'.

<sup>156</sup>Yeide, 2009, 504.

a foreign provenance and were brought into the country with a temporary import license. In 1941, Contini Bonacossi sold to Goering fifteen paintings in two different transactions. According to NARA, many of the thirty-four cases presented at the Export Office in Rome by the firm Stein were on behalf of Goering for export to him at Karinhall. The total declared value was 200,000liras.

By letter n. 4732 of 18 November 1941, the Ministry of National Education informed the Export Office that by order of Mussolini the export tax was to be paid by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; that the Export Office should grant the exportation permit, merely ascertaining the identity of the works of art and holding their evaluation as low as possible...Correspondence in Allied hands now identifies at least the first fifteen items as two lots purchased by Hofer, Goering's agent, from the Florentine antiquary Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, on 29 May 1941 and 20 October 1941, according to Hofer for a total of 12,5000,000 liras for the fifteen items alone.<sup>157</sup>

According to Yeide though, the official sales took place over two days in December. They are recorded as follows: On 1 December 1941, Contini Bonacossi sold the first of two female portraits attributed to Bachiacca for 900,000liras; they are now in the Uffizi Collection.<sup>158</sup> On 2 December 1941, Contini Bonacossi sold 14 paintings, mainly of the Venetian school, to Goering through Hofer. Two paintings by Canaletto, *Italian Landscape with Lagoon and Ruins* and *Italian Landscape with Lagoon and Triumphal Arch*, sold for 400,000 liras each; they are now at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. A mythological scene by Sebastiano Ricci, *Diana and Calisto*, sold for 200,000.<sup>159</sup> Two *Views of the Interior of Saint Peter* by Giovanni Pannini sold as a pair for 250,000 liras, were presented by Goering on 20 April 1943 as a gift to the Führer. *Reclining Female Nude*, in the Contini Collection since 1923 (fig. 111), was sold for 800,000 liras and is now at the Uffizi Gallery (as a *Venus*).

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<sup>157</sup>Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points ("Ardelia Hall Collection"): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952. NARA, Microfilm 1947, Reel 847, Wiesbaden CCP, General Record, Restitution of Italian works of art, RG 239, entry 73, box 75, 5. Online through Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/image/232009066>[accessed 31 March 2016].

<sup>158</sup>Now attributed to an unknown artist Veneto-friulano, Uffizi Gallery cat. N. 00194027 (inv. 1890, n. 9950).

<sup>159</sup>Yeide 2009: n. A1093-A1094 (Canaletto); A1094-95 (Panini), 370; A1102 (Sebastiano Ricci), 371. Also for bibliographical reference related to the present location at the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice.

And Tintoretto's *Leda and the Swan*, (fig. 88) in the Contini stock since 1926, was sold for 1,350,000liras.<sup>160</sup> The same sale including two Veronese paintings, *Venus and Satyr* (now *Jupiter and Antiope*) and *Venus and Mars*, both now at the Uffizi Gallery;<sup>161</sup> one Peter Paul Rubens, *Judith and Holofernes*, bought in London at a Sotheby's sale (probably through a private sale from Marquess Borghesani) in 1924 for 400,000 liras and now at the Uffizi Gallery;<sup>162</sup>a portrait attributed to Titian, *Princess Cristina of Sweden*;<sup>163</sup>a portrait in the manner of Alessandro Botticelli;<sup>164</sup> and a *Nativity* from the School of Ghirlandaio formerly in the Barberini-Corsini Collection, now attributed to Antoniazio Romano and part of the permanent collection at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini in Rome.<sup>165</sup> The *Portrait of Elizabeth of Valois* by Sanchez Coelho, now at the Uffizi Gallery, was sold by Contini Bonacossi to Goering for 200,000 liras.<sup>166</sup>Also sold that day were *A Portrait of a Woman with Gloves* by Cariani, which was returned to Italy on 16 December 1953, and a painting attributed to an unknown artist from Lombardo-Veneto (previously to Vincenzo Catena). The latter painting is now part of the Uffizi Gallery, while the location of the previous one is unknown.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>The paintings are not included in the systematic catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery published in 1979. They can be found at the Centro di Documentazione, Ufficio Catalogo, Polo Museale Fiorentino, online: <http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/catalogo>. For *Venus* Bernardino Licinio: cat. N. 00193965 (inv. 1890, inv. 9943); and for the Tintoretto, cat. N. 00233166 (inv. 1890, n. 9946) [access on 7 April 2016].; In Yeide 2009, n. A1097-98, p. 371.

<sup>161</sup>Paolo Veronese: *Jupiter and Antiope*, cat. n. 00193960 (inv. 1890, N. 9941) and *Venus and Hermes presenting Eros and Anteros to Jupiter* (inv. 1890, n. 9942), in Yeide 2009, n. A1099-10, 371.

<sup>162</sup>Uffizi Gallery cat. n. 00193982, Inv. 1890, n. 9966); Yeide 2009, A1101, 371.

<sup>163</sup>This painting could be the *Portrait of a Lady* bought from Knoedler in 1928. M. Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971]. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler Book 8, Stock No. 16875, Page 18, Row 35. Getty Research Institute. The identification is only a suggestion as no documentary evidence can be put forward at this time in support of this option. The painting is now at Belgrade in the Narodnj Musej n. 132. Yeide 2009, A1103, 371.

<sup>164</sup>Yeide 2009, A1104, 371.

<sup>165</sup>Mochi Onori and Vodret, 2008, inv. 4219, 68; Yeide 2009, A1105, 371.

<sup>166</sup>The painting is not included in the systematic catalogue of the Uffizi Gallery published in 1979. It can be found at <http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/catalogo>, cat. N. 00292968 (inv. 1890, n. 9955), Yeide 2009, A1107, 372.

<sup>167</sup>Vincenzo Catena: Uffizi Gallery, Cat., N. 00193977, (inv. 1890, 99).



In 1942, Contini Bonacossi sold to Goering ten paintings in seven transactions. On 20 January 1942, he sold a second painting by Tintoretto, a *Madonna and Child*, for 1,350,000.<sup>168</sup> On 8 February 1942, he sold two female portraits: one thought to be by Bachiacca, now attributed to Jacopo di Giovanni di Francesco, and *Portrait of a Lady*, attributed to Vincenzo Catena.<sup>169</sup> No price was reported for either work; they are both now at the Uffizi Gallery.<sup>170</sup> On 13 May 1942, Contini Bonacossi sold probably the most important painting of his stock: *The Madonna of Humility* by Masolino da Panicale bought by Contini Bonacossi at a Christie's sale in London on 20 June 1930 through Giuseppe Bellesi. Sold for 2,000,000 liras, this masterpiece was exported to Germany on 2 July 1942 (fig. 106). On 16 November 1954, it was repatriated and since then has hung in the Uffizi Gallery.<sup>171</sup> Along with the Masolino, two paintings by Giovanni Martino Spanzotti, one representing *Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine* and the other representing *Saint Bernardino, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Sebastian, the Abbot and the Founder*. Both paintings were bought by Contini Bonacossi from the Reverend Giovanni Pusinieri, the principal of Collegio Rosmini, a Catholic school in Stresa Borromeo, Italy.<sup>172</sup> The details of the transaction (found at the ACS in Rome) are reported here for the first time. On Roberto Longhi's recommendation, Pusinieri reached out to Contini Bonacossi to offer these paintings and a triptych by Spanzotti's pupil Defendente Ferrari.

11 December 1941

Il professore Longhi mi fa sapere che voi siete disposto ad acquistare I due Spanzotti. Ve li cedo anche soli, al prezzo che il professore Longhi mi segnala di ottantamila lire, nette di ogni spesa di imballaggio, trasporto e eventuali tasse. Il prof. Longhi accenna alle disposizioni di legge che regolano il trapasso di opera d'arte, nel caso fossero di un ente o inventariate. Esse sono di proprietà privata e per quanto mi costa non sono inventariate, a meno che non abbiano acquistato tale caratteristica per il fatto della loro esposizione a Torino.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Belgrade to the Narodnj Musej , n. 131. Akinsha 2001, 148-156.

<sup>169</sup>Jacopo di Giovanni di Francesco (ex Bachiacca), *Portrait*, Uffizi Gallery , inv. 1890, n. 9932.

<sup>170</sup>Jacone (ex Catena), Uffizi, Gallery, cat. N. 00194015 inv. 1890, 9932).

<sup>171</sup>Yeide 2009, A 1225, 386, Uffizi Gallery Cat. N. 00233165, inv. 1890, n. 9922).

<sup>172</sup>Galleria Sabauda, Torino, n. 1038; 1039. Yeide 2009, A1226-27, 387.

<sup>173</sup>ACS, AABBA, DIV III 1929-1960 busta 258-258bis. The sale of these paintings, the two Spanzotti as well and the Defendente Ferrari bought and sold few months later, needed to be

Contini Bonacossi bought the Spanzotti paintings on 17 December 1941 for the price indicated by the priest. He probably bought the paintings with the intention of selling them to Goering, which in fact happened a few months later, on 13 May 1942. In July 1942, Contini Bonacossi sold to Goering two paintings of the Ferrarese school, now attributed to Carpaccio, *Saint Rochas* and *Saint Sebastian*.<sup>174</sup> In the same month, Contini Bonacossi sold him three additional works of art: a pastel on canvas, *Portrait of Felicita Sartori* by Rosalba Carriera; *Portrait of a Knight* by Bernardino Licini (now attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo) for 470,000liras; and *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, a painting by Alessandro Bonvicino, called Moretto da Brescia. It is now held at the Uffizi Gallery, (inv 1890, 9952) along with two panels by Carpaccio. All three works were returned to the Italian government on 16 December 1953.<sup>175</sup>

A few months earlier, on 9 February 1942, Contini Bonacossi reached out again to the priest in Stresa reiterating his willingness to purchase the triptych by Defendente Ferrari previously offered with the two Spanzotti paintings.

Caro Reverendo,

Sarei disposto ad acquistare il trittichetto se voi consentite a cedermelo per 125.000lire. Il reverendo che venne a portarmi le due tavole ebbe occasione di vedere le fotografie di altre opere importantissime del Maestro già in mio possesso. Il vostro dipinto non rappresenterebbe perciò nessuna aggiunta vitale per la mia collezione. Devo aggiungere che solo la conoscenza dello scopo al quale sarebbe devoluta la somma mi ha spinto a farvi l'offerta di lire 125.000 perchè in realtà il valore intrinseco del quadro si aggira al di sotto delle 100.000 lire. Comunque se deciderete ad accettare la mia offerta, vi pregherei di farmi avere il quadro senza ritardo dovendo assentarmi da un momento all'altro per un lungo periodo.<sup>176</sup>

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authorized by the Ministry of Education as required by law. Apparently, Contini Bonacossi did not notify the government about these purchases. See Archivio Giovanni Poggi, SERIE VII, Collezioni e lasciti, n.134, Archivio del Polo Museale Fiorentino, Vendita non autorizzata dal Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (cc.6 ms., cc.10 ds; 5-1-1946 / 6-2-1947). Both Contini Bonacossi and the priest were exonerated on 11 February 1947 and all the accusations of illegal trade were dropped. The news was reported also in the local newspaper 'Il Mattino dell'Italia Centrale', 25 April 1947, Section ACS, AABBA, DIVIII1929-1960, busta 258-258bis.

<sup>174</sup>Akinsha 2001, n. 135-136, Yeide 2009, A1241-43, 388.

<sup>175</sup>Yeide 2009, A1241, 388, Uffizi Gallery n. 9988; Yeide, 2009, A1244, 388; A1240, 388.

<sup>176</sup>ACS, AA.BB.AA, DIV III, 1929-1960, 258-258bis. The Ferrari triptych was then sold to Goering on 31 October 1942 and it is now at the Galleria Sabauda, Turin, Italy, n. 1040. Yeide 2009, A1252, 389.

Contini Bonacossi made a solid profit when he sold the triptych to Goering on 31 October 1942 for 300,000liras; it was returned to the Italian government on 17 March 1954. The last sale from Contini Bonacossi to Goering was certainly the most expensive. On 18 December 1942, Goering purchased two paintings by Giovanni Bellini, *Male Saint* and *Female Saint* for 4.000.000liras. The paintings were returned to the Italian government on 17 March 1954 and are now part of the collection of the Uffizi Gallery.<sup>177</sup>

As we learn from Rodolfo Siviero, the program of the German General Staff regarding the looting of the works of art prepared by the Gestapo, in place since 1937, was very efficient and crafted according to the circumstances of each country in which it was implemented (occupied or not). In Italy, Germany took advantage of the friendship of the Axes. The Duce faced the problem of the looting of Italian masterpieces perpetrated by Hitler with Goering by simply looking away (*guardando lontano*).<sup>178</sup> This political attitude towards the arts lasted until the end of fascist rule in Italy.

#### ***1944-45: Contini Bonacossi's art claims***

On 25 July 1943, the Fascist Regime collapsed. On 8 September 1943, with the signing of the armistice, Italy surrendered to the Allied Forces and officially became an occupied territory. After the armistice, the German army established an institution, called *Kunstschutz*, or Office for the Protection of Works of Art. This Office worked to catalogue and transfer paintings, statues and archival documents from their original locations—which were becoming unsafe along with the advancement of the Freedom war- to a secure location. Colonel Alexander Lagsdorff, an art expert, was in charge of the *Kunstschutz* in Florence. Many art experts from all

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<sup>177</sup>The two paintings are now at the Uffizi Gallery with a different attribution and subject: One is a *Prophet* by Vittore Belliniano, Uffizi Gallery, inv. 1890 n. 9939, the other is a *Sibyl* given to Niccolo Rondinelli, Uffizi Gallery, inv 1890, n. 9938. Yeide 2009, A1301-02, 394.

<sup>178</sup>Siviero 1984, 20.

over Italy worked for him. The official goal was to avoid these art works being destroyed by the bombings, but in fact this was a pretext to snatch them from their legitimate owners and place them in the Trentino Alto-Adige region, an Italian territory already annexed to Hitler's Germany. At this stage of the war, the charade of legal purchases no longer had any reasons to exist.<sup>179</sup>

As mentioned, at the end of the war, due to his relationship with Fascism and his dealings with Goering, Contini Bonacossi was charged by the High Court of Justice with collaborationism and crimes against the Nation.<sup>180</sup> On 26 April 1945, Contini Bonacossi's claim for forty-eight paintings stolen from his villa in Trefiano was put on hold. According to the records of the Roberts Commission (held in the archives of National Gallery of Art in Washington DC), the Kunstschutz, headed by Dr. Bode's nephew Leopold Reidemeister, cleared out Contini Bonacossi's villa in Trefiano and Carmignano on 20 August 1944, during the same looting campaign Reidemeister undertook at the Villa of Poggio a Caiano. Unfortunately for Contini Bonacossi, of the forty-eight paintings missing from his stock, all but eight were found by the Allied Forces in Campo Turre, near Bolzano in May 1945.<sup>181</sup> The American authorities consigned the forty paintings to the Superintendency in Florence for safe custody; they advised the Italian officials to provisionally keep these pictures from their owner until a full inquiry into his past dealings with the Nazis was completed.<sup>182</sup> A list of the forty paintings in question was presented to the court in Florence by Contini Bonacossi's lawyer Gaetano Casoni for the restitution of his

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<sup>179</sup>Siviero, 1984, 22.

<sup>180</sup>ACS, AABBA, Div III, 1929-1960, busta 258-258bis.

<sup>181</sup>Reports of Italian Officials, July 1945. GA-NGA RG 28, MFAA-D4, Box 4 Folder b.

<sup>182</sup>Inventory Check of Works of Art removed by Germans compiled by Allied Military Government and Fine Arts Section, Headquarters Toscana Region (RVIII/31/ MFAA/4.8) from 31 May 1945, NARA, RG 239, M1944roll 73 Records of American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historical Monuments in War Areas (Roberts Commission) 1943-1946, Series: Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Branch (MFAA) Field Reports, MTO-Reports On Repositories Of S. Leonardo E Campo Turre-Interrogations Of Kunstschutz Personnel. Online through [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) <https://www.fold3.com/image/270190817> [accessed 7 April 2016]. See also letter 2090/20/H/MFAA from Lieutenant Colonel Ward Perkins to Arangio Ruiz, Director General for Antiquities and Fine Arts at the Ministry of Education in Rome, 5 October 1945, ACS, and AABBA, Div III 1929-1960, 258-259bis.

property. Among the Venetian School there was Palma il Giovane, *Paradiso* and a portrait given to Savoldo. Among the Northern Italian School: Andrea Solario, *Pieta*; Gaudenzio Ferrari, *The Nativity*; (fig. 75) Bramantino, *Madonna and Saint* (fig.149); Francesco Morone, *Annunciation* (fig. 64). Tuscan School: Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, *Self Portrait*; Francesco Salviati, *Male Portrait*; Pontormo, *Female Portrait*; Pontormo, *Portrait of a Young Boy*; attributed to Ghirlandaio, *Angel*; Andrea del Sarto, *Portrait of a Woman*. For the Italian 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Fra' Galgario, *Portrait of a Young Boy*; Giovan Battista Piazzetta, *Two Figures*; Giovanni Rotari, *Portrait of a Woman*; Ricci, *Portrait of a Woman*; Canaletto, *View of Venice and View of Countryside*. Spanish School: Murillo, *Little Landscape*; Murillo, *Still Life*; Zurbaran, *Saint Anne and the Virgin*; Zurbaran, *Angel*; El Greco, *Stigmata*; Eugenio Lucas, *Las Moncinas*; Ribera, *Saint*; Luis Tristan, *Holy Family* (fig. 102); Eugenio Lopez, *Portrait*. French School, *Four paintings about the Arts*; Claude Lorrain, *Two Landscapes*; Francois Boucher, *L'amour Moissonneur*. Eight works were reported as missing: two sketches by Murillo; two still lifes by Zurbaran; one nativity by El Greco; one female portrait by Gonzales; one still life by Melendez; one portrait by Lucas.

Contini Bonacossi's business relationship with Goering certainly did not help him in claiming looted property from the Italian government. After numerous letters written between 1944 and 1947 and formal legal action, the works were returned in 1948 after the charges were dropped. Unfortunately, the eight missing works were never recovered and are still missing. During Contini Bonacossi's campaign for restitution, he relied on a few important allies willing to testify on his side. One such ally was Bernard Berenson, who wrote letters on his behalf in 1945 and 1946.

Conosco da oltre trent'anni il Conte Alessandro Contini Bonacossi che ha dimorato per lunghi periodi negli Stati Uniti dove ha contribuito alla formazione di importanti collezioni d'arte. Allo stesso tempo egli ha messo insieme la sua collezione privata, formata prevalentemente con opere esulate in altri tempi dall'Italia e da lui ricondotte in patria, collezione che a mio giudizio puo considerarsi una delle piu importanti d'Europa. [...]Parlando com il Conte Contini Bonacossi ha sempre espresso la sua simpatia per gli Stati Uniti deprecando come tragico errore tanto l'alleanza con la Germania quanto l'entrata in guerra contro gli Alleati.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup>Letter from Bernard Berenson, ACS, AABBA, DIV III, 1929-1960, busta 258-258bis.

Giovanni Poggi, the Superintendent in Florence, to whom Contini Bonacossi had expressed his willingness to donate his collection and villa to that city in 1945, also testified on Contini Bonacossi's side. On 23 October 1945, he wrote to the Attorney General.

Dichiaro che quando gli emissari del Maresciallo Goering iniziarono gli approcci con il conte Alessandro Contini Bonacossi [at the beginning of 1941] per la cessione dei quadri della sua collezione, questi si rivolse a me per domandarmi se era possibile inventariare la sua collezione in blocco o comunque trovare una qualsiasi forma per renderla inalienabile. Dichiaro inoltre che non fu possibile attuare questo piano per la mancanza materiale di tempo utile, dato il grandissimo numero e la complessità degli oggetti da elencare. Devo inoltre dichiarare che sin dal primo giorno che conobbi il Seantore Contini Bonacossi, questi mi comunicò che era sua intenzione di donare la collezione alla Nazione A questo scopo il Conte acquistava di preferenza oggetti inventariati di grande importanza, praticamente inalienabili. Quando questi erano liberi, come per esempio nel caso della famosa pala d'altare del Sassetta [fig.146] che era stata dichiarata esportabile dal Ministero, il Conte Contini Bonacossi stesso ne sollecitò la catalogazione, che venne effettuata.<sup>184</sup>

Indeed, Contini Bonacossi confidentially communicated to Florence Mayor Gaetano Pieraccini his intention to make the aforementioned donation a year after, on 11 August 1946.

In occasione del primo anniversario della liberazione di Firenze, mia moglie ed io desideriamo confermarle la nostra ferma intenzione di offrire in dono al patrimonio artistico Cittadino la nostra galleria d'arte, iniziata circa trent'anni fa, e da noi raccolta in Italia e specie all'estero, sempre con il miraggio di farne offerta a quest'illustre città, nostra patria di elezione. Siamo inoltre disposti a donare anche il palazzo che ospita la collezione con il relativo parco, riservandone per me ed i miei il parziale uso, il tutto conforme ai precisi accordi e modalità che a suo tempo verranno stipulati con l'autorità competente. Fino a tanto che la donazione non potrà essere perfezionata, voglia considerare il contenuto della presente come strettamente confidenziale e da non portarsi a conoscenza, in nessun modo, del pubblico e della stampa.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>Letter from Giovanni Poggi to the Attorney General on 23 Ottobre 1945, ACS, AABBA, DIV III, 1929-1960, busta 258-258bis.

<sup>185</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Gaetano Pieraccini, 11 August 1946, in Giovanni Poggi Papers, Series VII, Collezioni e lasciti, n.134, Archivio del Polo Museale Fiorentino, (cc.6 ms., cc.10 ds; 5-1-1946 / 6-2-1947).

### *1946-1955. Post-war years and death*

At the end of the war, Contini Bonacossi's commerce overseas resumed. His sales to Samuel Kress and his Foundation picked up again. As I will explore in the fourth chapter, before his death in 1955, the Count undertook three more substantial deals with Kress, his most loyal client: in 1948, 1950 and 1952. On 27 August 1949, in their Villa Forte dei Marmi on the Tyrrhenian coast, Vittoria Contini Bonacossi died at the age of seventy-eight after suffering a heart attack. In her inspiring "moral will", the Countess reiterated their willingness to donate their gallery and their house Villa Vittoria to the city of Florence.<sup>186</sup>

On 20 March 1950 the Count undersigned his wife's "moral will" and expressed the desire to donate the art objects displayed in his house to the Italian government.

[...] Per quanto si riferisce alla galleria d'Arte contenuta nel Palazzo sito al Pratello Orsini [Villa Vittoria] voglio qui ripetere quanto scrisse nel suo testamento morale la mia amatissima moglie [...]. Scrivo questo mio testamento in fretta perche domani devo partire per l'America. Esso risulta un po' arido e schematico ed avrei voluto aggiungervi un mio testamento morale, ma purtroppo mi manca il tempo per farlo.<sup>187</sup>

After his wife's death, the Count went back to the United States three more times: twice with his nephew and Gualtiero Volterra (one of Contini Bonacossi's agents), and once in 1954 with his second wife Atala Pampaloni Del Beccaro. Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi died on 22 October 1955 at Villa Vittoria in Florence at the age of seventy-seven. In 1969 part of his private collection became property of

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<sup>186</sup>Contini Bonacossi Family Archive, Capezzana, Prato. "Vi e una cosa che mi affligge ed e che prima del mio abbandono della vita non abbia potuto avere compimento il desiderio mio e di mio marito di fare della nostra raccolta di opere d'arte un tutto destinato a non suddividersi, un tutto la cui conservazione affidata allo Stato Italiano o alla Città di Firenze, sia, nel nostro nome, oggetto di perenne ammirazione di quelli che verranno. Il pensiero che la nostra grande collezione, frutto delle comuni fatiche di tanti anni, in cui i piu celebrati pittori convivono magnificamente [...] possa essere separata, distrutta, possa venire dispersa o diminuita, e per me veramente angoscioso. Nano caro, figli miei, fate in modo che, se prima non avremo potuto dare esecuzione al nostro desiderio, fate in modo, vi scongiuro, che la Galleria Vittoria e Alessandro Contini Bonacossi abbia vita e l'abbia per sempre. Perchè e questa realizzazione che io veramente agogno, non mossa da desideri materiali, ma per un'altra idealita del mio spirito. I capolavori che abbiamo raccolto insieme io e mio marito, cominciando dal nulla, devono formare in avvenire nella loro unità il godimento spirituale di tutti i Fiorentini e di quelli che li vedranno, saranno per tutti fonte meravigliosa di cultura e di elevamento per le anime. Non per me, ma per il bene dei miei simili".

<sup>187</sup>Contini Bonacossi Family Archive, Capezzana, Prato.

the Italian Government, and it is currently installed in the Uffizi Gallery. A committee made a selection for the State as to which works would be accessioned and displayed. The family sold the remainder mainly in the United States.<sup>188</sup>

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This section has aimed at profiling Contini Bonacossi and at framing the historical background in which his activities started and developed. The following section has a different goal. In bringing to light for the first time his relationship with Wilhelm von Bode Gualtiero Volterra and Barone von Hadeln and in offering more details regarding his known contacts with Bernard Berenson, Roberto Longhi, what follows is an indication of his connections that influenced but also extended well beyond his dealing with the most up to date scholarship and museology of the time.

#### *Connoisseurs, Agents and Advisors*

As one surveys the rapid growth of the trade of Old Masters at the turn of the century, nothing is more striking than the growth of the “cult of authenticity” among rich collectors and the rise of the profession of “consulting art historian.” Dealers needed to resort to the professionals to guarantee their attributions. It would be many years before the role of the art critic and historian would be sharply separated from that of the private dealer and collector. In the flush times of the Belle Époque such a scrupulous distinction was highly disregarded.<sup>189</sup>

Dante Alighieri’s quote “Credette Cimabue ne la pittura tener lo campo, e ora ha Giotto il grido, sì che la fama di colui è scura” is commonly acknowledged as the first art criticism since ancient times.<sup>190</sup> However, according to Paolo Coen, in his volume on the art market in Rome during the eighteenth century, it was Giorgio Vasari that mentioned the role of the expert for the first time, in his *Lives of the Most*

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<sup>188</sup>The recollection of events goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. On the topic: Salmi, 1967, 222-232; *Gazzetta Antiquaria*, 1969, 14; Mariano, 1969, 325; Philips, 1969; Philips, 1970, 118-125; Berti and Bellosi, 1974; Lazzerini, 1974; Dentice, 1974, 37; *Gli Uffizi*, 1979; Haskell, 1981, 33. On the collection at the Uffizi see Fossi, 2008. A recent study on this episode is the Master’s Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies by Bruci, 2016. Many thanks to Lisa Bruci for sharing her manuscript with me. The systematic catalogue of the collection has been published in 2018.

<sup>189</sup>Samuels, 1979, 311.

<sup>190</sup>Alighieri, 1965, XI, 94-96.



*Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (1568)*.<sup>191</sup> Increasingly since the beginning of the twentieth century, an art expert, or connoisseur, was regularly used by art dealers to substantiate and legitimize the quality of the merchandise, as would typify Contini Bonacossi's practice.<sup>192</sup> Generally, the art expert employed was occasionally an artist or a conservator, but usually an art historian or scholar whose knowledge of art derived mostly from scholarly study and whose approach to the matter was intellectual. An art expert could be an academic, a consultant to a wealthy collector or a prestigious dealer, a mediator, a collector himself. Often, especially during the first half of the last century, the art expert wore some of these hats simultaneously. The art expert's role in the configuration of the art system was crucial. As Ernest Samuels pointed out, the "cult of the authenticity" was born as of the art-market boom at the end of the nineteenth century, with the art expert increasingly engaged in the practice of "connoisseurship." Sometimes this connoisseurial analysis was translated into a scholarly contribution, but, in general terms, the connoisseurship was business oriented; it benefitted the dealers, collectors, and scholars. Coen defines connoisseurship as:

The practice of attributing paintings to different artists and consequently of drawing up hierarchies among artists and trends, hierarchies that will have an impact on the final prices and valuations.<sup>193</sup>

Contini Bonacossi was no exception in this regard. As a dealer, he could not do business with anonymous paintings. The experts he used for vetting his pieces and advising him in his purchases are among the most important art historians of the last century: Adolfo Venturi, Frederick Mason Perkins, Robert Langston Douglas, Wilhelm von Suida, Federico Zeri, Giorgio Gronau, Tancred Borenius, Giuseppe Fiocco and many more. Three, according to the documentation available to me to date, played a more active role in Contini Bonacossi's business career and acquisition policy and therefore will be discussed in more detail. The first is the scholar and curator Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929), the essential point of reference

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<sup>191</sup>Coen, 2010, 79.

<sup>192</sup>*Connoisseurs of the world; being an international biographical dictionary of connoisseurs, collectors and patrons of art*, London, 1943; Gaskell, 2002, 146-162.

<sup>193</sup>Coen, 2010, 81.

for Contini Bonacossi's early years until his death in 1926. The second is the celebrated art historian Roberto Longhi (1890-1970), who built the intellectual foundation for Contini Bonacossi's trading after his return to Italy, staying in his circle until the Count's death. The third is the Harvard laureate Bernard Berenson (1865-1959), the dealer/scholar of Italian Renaissance Art and consultant to major American collectors and museums, who lived in Florence after 1900.

### ***The Contini Bonacossi-Bode correspondence (1914-1926).***

The relationship between Alessandro Contini Bonacossi and Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1926) has never been explored in previous studies and Bode's influence on Contini Bonacossi's early years has been overlooked. Their correspondence (held at the Central Archives of the State Museums in Berlin) is unpublished and presented here for the time. Bode's role in the formation of the German museums and his involvement with the art market is well explored in the literature, as for example in the work by Paul and Levi.<sup>194</sup> But there are few studies devoted to this German art historian in his relationships with the dealers who were building the great museum collections of the times, like for example the book by Valerie Neymeyer-Cini, on Bode's relationship with the Italian dealer Stefano Bardini, or the essay by Anna Tüskés on Bode and its relationship with the art market.<sup>195</sup> A quote by Augusto Jandolo does give us the sense of what Bode represented for dealers at the time:

Conobbi appena trentenne il dottor Guglielmo Bode, direttore dei musei tedeschi a mezzo del Ferroni. Fu lui a condurmelo a studio la prima volta e ricordo le affettuose parole che il tedesco mi disse nell'accorgersi del mio imbarazzo. Sembrera un po' strano, ma bisognava avere vissuto nel mondo antiquario di trenta anni fa per capire cosa valesse e che rappresentasse il Bode allora. In fatti di arte italiana era, senza esagerare, la prima competenza del mondo. Non credete che facesse pesare questa eccezionale dottrina. Uomo semplice ed accessibilissimo, quando sbagliava era il primo a confessarlo. Vestiva serio e modesto. Avevo comprato nel 1914 due grandi tele che

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<sup>194</sup>Paul and Levi, 1995, 9-32.

<sup>195</sup>These essays by Tüskés, 2013, 145-163, and the book by Neymeyer-Cini, 2009, are among the few scholarly works investigating Bode's relationship with dealers based on the scholar's correspondence.

attribuivo allo Strozzi. Sull'orizzonte non era ancora apparso un Roberto Longhi da consultare per la precisa attribuzione di un quadro seicento. Il dottor Bode osservo a lungo le due pitture [...]. Si piu li guardo piu mi sembrano Strozzi [...] per quanto discordi di tono sono proprio due opere di Strozzi.<sup>196</sup>

As we learn from their twelve unpublished letters (one in French, one in English and ten in Italian) Bode had a fundamental role in shaping Contini Bonacossi's purchases, a role that lasted until the scholar's death in 1929.<sup>197</sup> This correspondence is remarkable for many reasons. Contini Bonacossi's letters are very rare, and even rarer the evidence of his dealings at the beginning of his career. On 27 February 1914 he contacted Bode for the first time, seeking confirmation of an expert opinion Bode wrote for Dr. Paolo Paolini about a painting by Van Dyck, *Le Vieux Christopher Vanderford*, recently acquired by Contini.

He wrote:

Monsieur,

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<sup>196</sup>Jandolo, 1938, 102-3.

<sup>197</sup>Bode's expertise and good first-hand knowledge of art collections in the United States that he visited on two occasions in 1893 and in 1911 prior to Contini Bonacossi's interaction certainly influenced the dealer's strategies overseas in the following years. Bode's opinions on the state of the arts in the US was held in such high esteem by Americans that "The Lotus Magazine" felt the need to publish a report in 1911 about the impressions the scholar had about private and public collections to be found in the US "Bode's comments from 1911 are one more evidence of the boom the art market was experiencing between 1910-14 and the diaspora of the old masters paintings that occurred in the UK and the acquisition power of moneyed American collectors. Dr. Wilhelm Bode, the distinguished art expert, arrived in this country late in October and left here after having visited our principal private and public art galleries. [...] Owing to his high position in the world of art he was afforded every opportunity for seeing the leading American collections. In them he found many old friends, he also is an expert on whose opinion collectors rely in securing their masterpieces. [...] he was prepared to find in the United States many masterpieces by old masters, well knowing that these has been sold to America out of European collections, and yet he was astonished to find so many. [...] From this first trip to this country, in 1893, Dr. Bode knows that there were to be found here many superb examples of the French school and many fine English pictures, but he did not expect to find several private collections of pictures as well as of works of art that deserve to be called veritable museums, because in them nearly all the good masters of different schools are represented, just as in public galleries in Europe. American museums he considered improved in an extraordinary manner since his first visit, which was the World Fair in Chicago. The Metropolitan Museum of Art [...], the Chicago Art Institute, Hispanic Society of New York, the Museum in New Heaven, the Philadelphia Museum and the Fogg Museum in Boston. Bode listed also art institutions in Toledo, Buffalo, Worcester, and Detroit, "just beginning which he expects will have an important influence, although of minor importance". It is certainly not by chance that these are the same cities Contini Bonacossi visited during in his American trips of the 1926, with the hope, as we have seen, of placing his works of art in the permanent collections of these museums.

Je dois tout d'abord m'excuser si j'ose de m'adresser à vous sans avoir l'honneur de vous très connu. Mais j'ai été encouragé par des amis qui m'ont assuré que vous ne dédaignez pas de mettre votre haute compétence au service de ceux qui désirent connaître votre opinion. Je suis un passionné amateur privé et je possède une galerie assez importante out toutes les écoles sont représentée. J'ai acheté il y a quelques jours ici à Dr. Paolini le portrait de Van Dyck représentant *Le Vieux Christopher Vanderford*. Or le vendeur m'a communiqué une lettre à vous dans laquelle vous affirmez que d'après l'examen des photographies vous n'avez pas hésité à attribuer le tableau en question à Antoine Van Dyck. [...] Je prends l'occasion pour vous dire que dans ma galerie les écoles flamande et hollandaise sont bien représentées et que je possède des jolies choses de Jordaens, Breughel, Teniers, Ostade, Steen, Snyders, Hobbema, etc...Puisque je sais que ces écoles vous intéressent je serais charmé si, on occasion de votre prochaine passage a Rome, je pourrais vous soumettre mes tableaux. Quoique je ne fais pas du tout de commerce, s'il y aura quelque chose qui vous intéressent particulièrement pour vos musées je ferais mon possible pour vous complaire. Dans l'espoir de recevoir vos réponses je vous renouvelle tous mes remerciement et je vous prie monsieur d'agréer l'expression de ma haute estime.<sup>198</sup>

Contini Bonacossi informs the German scholar about his holdings of Dutch School, "*bien représentée by Joaedens, Brueghel, Teniers, Ostade, Weemx, Dou, Steen, Snyders, Hobbema, etc.*," and invites him to his house to examine the paintings in person. Contini Bonacossi goes on to point out that, although he is not a dealer, he is very happy to fulfill any requests Bode might have about his paintings: "Quoique je ne fais pas du tout le commerce s'il y aura quelque chose qui vous interesse particulièrement pour vos musées je ferais mon possible pour vous complaire."<sup>199</sup>

Communication was paused for eight years (or at least the letters did not survive). It started again in 1922, when Contini Bonacossi reached out to Bode on November 25, this time writing in Italian. He states that he is sorry for missing Bode during a recent visit to Rome, and he informs the scholar of his latest purchases from Charles Sedelmeyer in Paris, including photos of paintings for which he sought Bode's expert validation:

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<sup>198</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 27 February 1914 SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

<sup>199</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 27 February 1914 SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

Sono molto spiacente che durante il suo recente viaggio a Roma non mi sia stato dato l'onore di una sua visita. Il mio buon amico dottor Longhi mi disse che ella ha espresso il desiderio di vedere la mia collezione [...] Colgo l'occasione di domandarle un piacere. Pochi giorni fa ho comprato dal sig. Sedelmeyer di Parigi parecchi quadri tra cui l'accluso Rembrandt giovanile. Il sig. Sedelmeyer mi mostrava una sua lettera dove diceva che l'avrebbe accluso nella sua prossima opera. Vorrebbe ella con una sua lettera a me diretta confermarlo e darmi qualche notizia e giudizio sul quadretto? [...] per ragioni ovvie desidererei che ella omettesse la provenienza del quadro. [...] Colgo l'occasione per rimetterle in esame un ritrattino con *figura allegorica* attribuito a Martin de Vos ed un *Ecce Homo* attribuito al Maestro della Vergine tra le Vergini.<sup>200</sup>

The painting *Ecce Homo*, attributed to the Master of the Virgo inter Virgines and originally held at the San Luca Convent in Rome, was sold by Contini Bonacossi to the Roerich Museum in New York. It was bought by M. A. Reyson of Chicago at the 1930 Roerich sale at the American Art Association and then donated to the Art Institute of Chicago, where it was exhibited from 1 June to November 1934. Another *Ecce Homo*, this time attributed to Alvise de' Donati, ended up in the permanent collection of the Princeton Art Museum.<sup>201</sup> This painting has an interesting story that reconfirms Contini Bonacossi's close ties to the American community in Rome and to the highest levels of academia in the United States. Vittoria Contini Bonacossi reported on this in her American diary:

2 Dicembre 1926

Il mare è splendido, abbiamo fatto altre amicizie, un pittore (e signora) americano che ha la villa in Toscana ed è una personalità, Roethaven, e di una signora decorata per essere stata in guerra ed istituito vari istituti contro la cecità, a Roma, la casa e in via Quattro Fontane, e al mio ritorno mi occuperò con piacere anch'io di questa grande opera. La signora ha scritto vari libri e me ne dedicherà qualcheduno. Essa si chiama da ragazza [manca nel testo] Ora si è sposata da quattro anni e il marito è un fratello del sig. Mather, che ci conosce ed è stato da noi a visitare la nostra splendida galleria, anzi papà gli

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<sup>200</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 25 November 1922. SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304. 6.1.1.

<sup>201</sup>Alvise de' Donati, *Ecce Homo*, inv. y100 donated to the Princeton Art Museum in 1924 by Contini himself. <http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/18569>. The painting was exhibited at "A century of Progress. Exhibition of paintings and sculptures" The Art Institute, Chicago, n. 124, 22. It is possible that on the same occasion Contini Bonacossi sold a painting by Jan Steen, *The Prayer of Tobias and Sarah* that ultimately ended up in the Goering collection through Goudstikker who bought the panel at Anderson Galleries, *The Roerich New York Sale* at the on 27 March 1930, lot. n. 144, as reported by Yeide (2009) 260.

regalò un quadretto per il suo Museo di Princeton University. Mi accorgo sempre di più che il mondo è piccolo.<sup>202</sup>

The Mr. Mather Vittoria refers to is Frank Jewett Mather Jr (1868-1953), an art critic and a professor of Renaissance art at Princeton University. Mather became a professor there in 1910 and was named director of the Princeton Museum of Art in 1922. As reported on the Princeton Museum's website, he had a prominent role in developing its collection:

Frank Mather collected in the fields of Medieval and Renaissance art but also propelled the Museum into significant holdings of prints and drawings [...] Following in Marquand's footsteps, Mather was also himself a distinguished collector and donor of art to the Museum he guided, often buying for the Museum works of art acquired with his own assets.<sup>203</sup>

In a letter from 9 January 1924, Contini Bonacossi again updates Bode on his purchases. Among them was *Judith* by Rubens, bought, according to the letter, directly from the Contessa Borghesani from Bologna “un vero capolavoro al cui acquisto mi ha spinto non poco una lettera *encomiastica che Ella indirizzo a suo tempo alla proprietaria*.”<sup>204</sup> Contini Bonacossi also informs the scholar that he is not interested in buying a male portrait by Pontormo, as he already owns a female portrait by the same artist: “che Ella ben conosce”.<sup>205</sup>

As we learn from a letter dated October 1924, Bode finally paid a visit to Contini Bonacossi's house on Via Nomentana in Rome. The scholar agreed to review the dealer's holdings on his return to Berlin. To facilitate this review, Contini Bonacossi

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<sup>202</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 49.

<sup>203</sup>Princeton Art Museum Website: <http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/about/history> (access 12 October 2017).

<sup>204</sup>According to Yeide, 2009, a painting by Rubens *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* for the Borghesani collection was sold by Contini Bonacossi to Goering on 2 December 1941 for 400,000 liras. Always per Yeide, this painting appeared at a Sotheby's auction in London on 25 June 1924 (lot n. 35). Contini Bonacossi also mentions in the letter, the purchase of a new Tintoretto, a portrait by El Greco, a sculpture by Amadeo, two Florentine cassoni, and a possible Goya, that will be the fourth in his collection.

<sup>205</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 9 January 1924, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

promised Bode a list of the works in his stock, divided by schools and marked with one, two, or three asterisks according to importance. He based his ratings on the comments Bode made during their visit. The list would be of primary importance because no other documentation or inventory of Contini Bonacossi's holdings at the time has survived. This list is not included in the correspondence held in Berlin, nor is the report made by Bode in November 1924. That report is not lost, however. It appears in its English translated version in the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation archives in New York City. I will discuss this report in the next chapter devoted to Contini Bonacossi's *gallerie*.

In the letter from 4 December 1924, Contini Bonacossi thanked Bode for his report and updated him on his recent purchases.

[...]la sua recensione mi giunse quando stavo sulle mosse per partire per Lucerna, ove avevo un appuntamento con Lulu Böhler and Heinemann. La sua memoria riesce a dare una perfetta esattissima sintesi della mia collezione quale nessun altro scritto avrebbe potuto giungere. [...] Il mio viaggio a Lucerna è stato molto profittevole per la mia raccolta. Ho comprato da Heinemann un bel ritratto di Goya del periodo medio, ed dal simpatico Lulu Böhler un bellissimo ritratto di Vandyck del periodo Genovese, di cui ella giustamente mi faceva rilevare la mancanza, un altro ritratto di Goya, un magnifico Paolo Veronese and 'last but not the least' un bellissimo Rembrandt '*Giuda che riporta le monete d'argento*'. [...]. Questo quadro mi fece appena lo vidi un effetto portentoso in paragone del quadro su tela dello stesso soggetto esistente nella collezione del Barone von Schikler di Parigi. Quando poi seppi che ella giustamente lo considerava l'originale dei due, non esitai un momento ad acquistarlo e ne sono orgoglioso. Per il Giuda vorrei pregarla di farmi avere una sua letterina nella quale mi confermasse la sua opinione.<sup>206</sup>

The paintings in question are all identifiable, and thanks to these letters the provenance prior to Contini Bonacossi can be established. There is a portrait by Francisco Goya, *The Infanta Maria Luisa, Princess of Parma, with a child in her arms* (fig. 18), a work by Rembrandt, *Judas returning the thirty pieces of silver*, bought from Böhler in 1924, is now considered a work after, not by, the master; it is held at the Museum Het Rembrandthuis, where it is on loan from the Cultural

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<sup>206</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 4 December 1924, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

Heritage Agency (Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst) in Amsterdam, Netherlands (fig. 25).<sup>207</sup> A female portrait by Van Dyck (possibly Van Dyck *Portrait of a woman with a lace ruff à la confusion*) (fig. 27) bought also by Contini Bonacossi from Böhler, passed to New York's Reinhart Gallery in 1927 (the sale from Contini Bonacossi to Reinhart is not yet possible to document at this stage). It entered the Denver Art Museum permanent collection thanks to a gift from the Guggenheim in 1957 (inv.1957.168). It reappeared at Christie's auction in New York City on 27 January 2010, lot. n. 325. Recently the painting was published on the website of the Philip Mould Gallery in London.<sup>208</sup>

In the letter from 15 November 1926, Contini Bonacossi informs Bode about the gift of a painting he had promised the scholar a few months before, in June. The request for expertise sheds light on the tactics Contini Bonacossi employed in the trading of his paintings: his use of experts and photographs, as well as the tricks and secrets behind his transactions. In the letter, Contini Bonacossi tells of his need to have Bode's opinions back in a timely manner, as he is about to leave for the United States with an assignment from the Italian government.

Ieri abbiamo avuto la visita del signor Bloch che ci ha portato le sue recenti e buonissime notizie. Il signor B. mi dice che era statao incaricato da lei di trovare per il suo museo un bel esempio del Crespi. Per combinazione io acquistai poco tempo fa, dietro vivissime raccomandazioni dell'amico Longhi, un vero gioiello del maestro che proveniva dalla Russia. Qualche cosa di eccezionale, al di sopra di Chardin! Desiderando che l'interessantissimo maestro si degnamente rappresentato a Berlino, e sapendo di dare a lei cosa grata mi sono deciso di offriglielo per il suo museo. Il quadro partira in settimana direttamente per posta. Ne sono certo ella ne restera pienamente soddisfatto.

Colgo l'occasione per domandarle un nuovo favore. Le accludo fotografie di tre miei importantissimi quadri per i quali mi urgerebbero le expertise. Come Ella rilevera, le fotografie sono realmente eccellenti e le possono dare un'esattissima visione di quello che sono gli originali. Inoltre le descrizioni di

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<sup>207</sup>Rijksbureau V. Kunsthistorische Documentatie online image archive (RKDimage), <https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/4675> [accessed 12 October 2017].

<sup>208</sup>See Böhler Archive, Luzern Stock book card, n. 3972, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich. According to the Böhler stock card n. 3972, the painting was originally bought by the second Lord of Meadow bank by English portraitist John Jackson RA from a Palace Collection in Genoa. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy Winter Exhibition of Old Master in 1910 (cat. n. 125). Böhler bought it from Agnew's on 15 February 1923 for GBP 1,500.00 and sold it to Contini Bonacossi on 23 December 1924; *ibid*; RKD <https://rkd.nl/explore/images/220549>, [accessed 12 October 2017].



Longhi, Gronau, etc.. di cui le accludo copie, serviranno a informarla di ogni minimo dettaglio, di colore, etc etc... Anche Suida, Venturi, Mayer, hanno visto i quadri e ne hanno scritto entusiasticamente, ma mi manca il tempo di farne copia. Non desidero degli scritti troppo lunghi, a me bastano alcune linee in forma di lettera che possono sintetizzare la grande importanza. Naturalmente per ragioni ovvie bisognerebbe che ella non facesse cenno al fatto che non ha visto gli originali, ma d'altra parte Longhi, Gronau, Hadeln assumono tutta la responsabilità delle loro dichiarazioni in merito alla qualità e allo stato dei dipinti.<sup>209</sup>

Bode accepted the gift of the Giuseppe Maria Crespi *Woman with a Child*, and the painting is still part of the permanent collection of the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.<sup>210</sup>

Contini Bonacossi reveals in this letter an aspect of his business of increasing interest for scholarly studies of the mechanisms of the art market in historic times: the use of photography as sales strategy, as explored by Alessandra Provo in her essay on the informational use of photography in the art market.<sup>211</sup> Contini Bonacossi in this letter to Bode seemed to confirm his use of photography both as an “object surrogate and a kind of expertise”.<sup>212</sup>

### ***Roberto Longhi [1890-1970]***

The archives at the Roberto Longhi Foundation in Florence are not yet open to scholarly access unfortunately. As is well known, for nearly twenty years, the art critic, connoisseur and art historian Roberto Longhi made his connoisseurial knowledge available to Contini Bonacossi's business. He provided the Count and his clients with written, scientific expert opinions on the authenticity of the artworks

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<sup>209</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode, 15 Novembre 1926, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

<sup>210</sup>Giuseppe Maria Crespi, Donna con Bambino, Fototeca Federico Zeri, Pittura italiana sec. XVIII. Bologna 1. Giuseppe Maria Crespi folder, 2 Soggetti Profani. On line: [http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.v2.jsp?tipo\\_scheda=OA&id=72536&titolo=Crespi%20Giuseppe%20Maria,%20Donna%20con%20bambino&locale=en&decorator=layout\\_resp&apply=true](http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.v2.jsp?tipo_scheda=OA&id=72536&titolo=Crespi%20Giuseppe%20Maria,%20Donna%20con%20bambino&locale=en&decorator=layout_resp&apply=true) [accessed 20 December 2017].

<sup>211</sup>Provo, 2017, 269-288.

<sup>212</sup>Provo, 2017, 273; 278.

they were trading, which were fundamental to their relationships with museums and philanthropic collectors in particular.<sup>213</sup>

The long-lasting relationship between the Contini Bonacossi and Longhi started in Rome, where Longhi lived until 1934.<sup>214</sup> It is possible that they met as early as 1911, when Longhi moved to Rome to attend Adolfo Venturi's classes at the University of Rome.<sup>215</sup> Between 1920 and 1922, Longhi was invited by Contini Bonacossi to join him in his frequent travels through Europe to buy art, attending seasonal auctions in London and visiting art dealers on a hunt for undiscovered masterpieces. According to Giovanni Previtali, this was a *Grand Tour* for Longhi, and it was crucial to his career: it gave him the tools and knowledge necessary to become a *conoscitore di livello europeo*.<sup>216</sup> And, as Previtali argues, the main features of Longhi's scientific studies of the 1920s and 1930s show the influence of his time as art advisor to the Count.<sup>217</sup> Surprisingly, these trips, though fundamental to formulating Longhi's criticism and aesthetic, have not been the subject of scholarly studies regarding Longhi. Presumably, this is due to the impossibility of accessing the documents (travel journals, records) held at the Fondazione Longhi in Florence.<sup>218</sup> Longhi himself, who was conscious of the importance of those two years, left testimony of them in his writings: in the introduction to the volume *Scritti Giovanili 1912-1922*,

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<sup>213</sup>Longhi's original expertise regarding artworks traded by Contini Bonacossi can be found in the curatorial files of every American museum with Kress holdings, especially at The National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.

<sup>214</sup>Previtali, 1982, 141-170.

<sup>215</sup>Lorizzo and Amendola, 2014.

<sup>216</sup>"La trasformazione di Longhi da critico vociano a conoscitore di livello europeo si maturò e si concluse negli anni 1920-1922 col viaggio in Europa (studiando a fondo i quadri esposti e i magazzini di quasi tutti i musei, grandi e piccoli, di Spagna, di Francia, e Germania), viaggio fatto in compagnia del collezionista Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, di cui era divenuto consulente per gli acquisti di opere d'arte". Previtali, 1982: 141-170.

<sup>217</sup>"La produzione degli anni Venti e Trenta di Longhi si presenta, rispetto agli anni giovanili, con caratteri profondamente diversi, ed è in apparenza del tutto conforme alla tattica propria del conoscitore preoccupato dell'appropriazione illegittima delle proprie scoperte da parte degli accademici e desideroso di ribadire a ogni passo il proprio prestigio professionale: si tratta cioè nella massima parte degli scritti che prendono spunto da una scoperta, inedito, una precisazione di paternità", Previtali, 1982, 156.

<sup>218</sup>The Longhi Archive has been closed and inaccessible for many years.

and, excerpted below, in his introduction to the volume *Saggi e Ricerche 1925-1928*, published in 1967. He writes that

Da chiarire invece l'apparente intermittenza di due anni dalla data terminale del primo volume [1922] che, dal ritorno del mio viaggio di esplorazione europeo (al di fuori dell'Inghilterra visitata più tardi) ne dava già due referti immediati col saggio "fittivo" sui dipinti italiani a Pommersfelden e con le annotazione in margine alla grande mostra sei-settecentesca a Palazzo Pitti. L'interruzione che segue, fino al 1925, è indotta dal mio lungo e casalingo lavoro di schedatura delle note di viaggio, dove pure erano gli spunti iniziali per molti scritti di questo volume. Un primo riflesso a stampa e del resto già nella prefazione del catalogo di Braunschweig dove il direttore Fleischig, nel 1922, avvertiva il riordinamento delle opere italiane era fondato sulle indicazione da me fornitegli. Ma il medesimo può valere per tanti altri casi: ad esempio, per il Domenico Veneziano visto a Monaco nel 1921. Le schede raccolte al Prado (estate 1920) sboccano nei saggio su Tiziano e l'Assereto; la visita a Orléans nel settembre del 1920, col ritrovamento di un giovane Velázquez, si conclude nel 1927 nel saggio sulle "Congiunture italo-spagnole tra il Cinque e Seicento". Nello stesso anno Chambery mi dà la traccia per il "saggio sugli italiani in Francia" 1927, dove appare tra l'altro, il ritratto di Paolo Uccello; ancora il Prado e poi Nantes, Pau, Braunschweig, Hannover, Berlino, Budapest (1920-1922) mi forniscono di schede per l'Assereto, quelle per il Ter Brugghen sono date da Parigi, da Le Havre, da Cassel, da Pommersfelden, da Vienna, Aix-en-Provence e Rouen (1920,1921) mi consento di schiudere il problema che, nel 1932, si concluderà con il nome di Gaspare Traversi e sboccherà nello studio del '27[...]. Non v'è insomma quasi alcun saggio in questo volume che non si trovi già in nuce nel mio schedario del 1920-1922.<sup>219</sup>

Yet it is unclear if Longhi had a share in Contini Bonacossi's business, like Berenson had with Duveen.<sup>220</sup>The numerous expert opinions written by Longhi in support of Contini Bonacossi's sales to Kress demonstrate the fact that Contini Bonacossi was using his services systematically to validate his wares.<sup>221</sup>In many instances, Longhi mentions his own work on the paintings. In his 1927 essay *Cartella Tizianesca* in *Saggi e Ricerche*, Longhi wrote:

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<sup>219</sup>Longhi, 1962, x.

<sup>220</sup>Trotta, 2003, 232; Bermahn, 1953; Secret, 2004; Rubin, 2000, 43.

<sup>221</sup>Virtually every curatorial file in every museum that received a Kress gift hold the original expertise letter written by Longhi and other experts Contini Bonacossi was using. In addition, the Gallery Archives at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC hold many of the written opinions given by Longhi and other scholars regarding the attribution of Kress paintings.

piu con quel sublime ‘riposo dalla fuga in egitto’ inciso da Van Vessel nella Galleria di Leopoldo Guglielmo e che, io riappreso da poco in una collezione privata italiana dove ho avuto la buona ventura di identificarlo, aver luogo che gli spetta nella mio prossimo libro su tutta l’attivit  del maestro.<sup>222</sup>

Longhi’s studies and interests focused on the re-discovery of neglected Italian artists from regional Italian schools, the *piccole patrie*, through what we can call the philological study of painting. Longhi was eager to study and to attribute the pictures Contini Bonacossi was amassing. At the time, seventeenth-century Italian painting, or *seicento art*, was not in high demand, and many paintings were still awaiting attribution. Studying and collecting these works was the prerogative of a few scholars and educated collectors, dealers, and connoisseurs.<sup>223</sup> Searching for Baroque paintings during the heart of the Berenson era, with its emphasis on the early Renaissance, meant swimming against the tide of international collecting. As Longhi wrote in 1962:

La diaspora Europea del Sei e Settecento Italiano era quasi tutta da riscoprire. Ed occorreano ormai non tanto libri, ma viaggi nei musei d’Europa [...]. L’ occasione del mio grand tour mi si offerse felicemente negli anni 1920-1922. Fu un arco amplissimo che mi porto dalla Spagna alla Francia, e per tutta l’Europa centrale, fino all’Ungheria. Era perci  prevedibile che la mia produzione a stampa si riducesse di molto, tanto tempo occorre per la schedatura e la vagliatura delle cose viste. Quel mio lungo viaggio in Europa, sulle cui memorie amo ancora oggi fondarmi, specialmente per quel che riguarda il Seicento.<sup>224</sup>

Because of this, I consider Contini Bonacossi’s early love for the art of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century to be one of his most interesting aspects, both as a collector and as a dealer. In 1913, he bought at the Aynard sale in Paris the bozzetto for Bernini’s equestrian monument of Louis XIV in Versailles; this piece was donated to the Galleria Borghese in Rome in 1919.<sup>225</sup> The first *seicento*

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<sup>222</sup>Longhi, 1927, 216-226.

<sup>223</sup>Ojetti, 1924; Rosenthal, 1930, 123; Townsend, 1994, 21-108; Kleinberger and Co., 1932. The catalogue was compiled by Lionello Venturi, Hermann Voss and Chick Austin.

<sup>224</sup>Longhi, 1962, xi.

<sup>225</sup>Bertini Calosso, 1924, 564.

paintings owned by Contini Bonacossi were by Assereto and De Mura (fig. 59-60). Both were exhibited at the great *seicento* show in 1922 at Florence's Palazzo Pitti.

### ***Bernard Berenson (1865-1959)***

In the years right before World War II, the relationship between Alessandro Contini Bonacossi and Bernard Berenson strengthened.<sup>226</sup> Thanks to his dealings with the American collector, Kress, Contini Bonacossi's business grew exponentially. In order to supply Kress with paintings from all major Italian schools and periods, and to confirm in writing the authenticity and attributions of those paintings, the Count had not only to diversify his portfolio, but also expand his network of art historians and experts. Berenson was held in high esteem by wealthy American collectors, who trusted his judgment on artistic matters. Berenson's presence in the Kress-Contini Bonacossi orbit became more evident especially after Lord Joseph Duveen debuted as one of Kress' art suppliers in 1934.<sup>227</sup> Accordingly, the three men were all in attendance at a fundraising event at New York's Waldorf Astoria on 5 April 1934. Organized by Italian-American millionaires, the event was held in support of Mussolini. It was reported on by the largest Italian-language American newspaper, which was owned by Generoso Pope, part of Contini Bonacossi's network (and one of those aforementioned Italian-American millionaires).<sup>228</sup> As we will see in the fourth chapter, in the late 1940s, Berenson became an indispensable ally for Contini Bonacossi; he aided in negotiations with the Kress Foundation to purchase paintings from the Count's gallery for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Berenson was duly rewarded around 1953 with a gift of two paintings, which are part of the permanent collection at the Villa I Tatti in Florence: Ambrogio Bergognone, *Madonna Nursing the Child with Flight to Egypt* and *Massacre of the*

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<sup>226</sup>Mariano, 1965, 22.

<sup>227</sup>Duveen succeeded in selling to Kress three Sieneese paintings in 1934. This sale paved the way. In 1936 he sold him eleven paintings and a sculpture and in 1937 another twenty-four pictures. A year later Kress bought eight more paintings, including one of the last major pictures that Duveen sold personally, the Allendale Nativity. For more information on the Duveen sales to Kress, see [www.kressfoundation.org/provenance](http://www.kressfoundation.org/provenance). [Access 19 December 2017].

<sup>228</sup>"Il Progresso Italo-Americano" 5 April 1934.

*Innocents in background*, and Lorenzo Lotto, *Christ on the Cross and the Symbols of the Passion*.<sup>229</sup>

*Baron Detlev von Hadeln (1878-1935) and Gualtiero Volterra (1901-1967)*

Between 1926 and 1935, three paintings from Colnaghi's stock found their way to Contini Bonacossi through the mediation of two advisors he employed most frequently: Baron Detlev von Hadeln (1878-1935) and Gualtiero Volterra (1901-1967), also known as *maestro*. Von Hadeln, a German scholar of Venetian painting, moved to Florence right after World War I.<sup>230</sup> A close figure to Contini Bonacossi, he was a constant presence on many of the Count's American trips.<sup>231</sup> Although not a dealer by profession, Von Hadeln entertained business with Contini Bonacossi, occasionally selling paintings to him, for instance, Tintoretto's *Leda and the Swan* and Titian's "*Portrait of a Cleric, Blue Coat, Blue Hat*, bought by Von Hadeln from Paolo Paolini in 1923 and resold by 1924 to Contini Bonacossi.<sup>232</sup>

The other agent with an active and documentable role -- especially after World War II--in Contini Bonacossi's business is Gualtiero Volterra (1901-1967).<sup>233</sup> From Florence, he was a professional pianist (hence "maestro") and a member of a prestigious Jewish family of Florentine art dealers, the Fratelli Volterra Firm, which did business directly with Kress and Contini Bonacossi. It is indeed very likely that Contini Bonacossi bought the two canvases, *Allegory of Chastity* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 64.2084) and *Allegory of Faith* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 64.2083)

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<sup>229</sup><http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvwork664282/catalog> [access 4 September 2016], inv. n. P70; <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/via/olvwork663498/catalog> [access on 4 September 2016] inv. N. P18.

<sup>230</sup>Middeldorf, 1966, 416-417.

<sup>231</sup>Von Hadeln is often quoted in Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 83, 98, 105, 115, 117, 119, 164, 168, 170, 172, 173, 176, 186.

<sup>232</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, , 2007, 83. Tintoretto, Uffizi Gallery, cat n. 00233166, inv 1890, n. 9946; Yeide 2009, A1097-98, 371. The painting by Titian, in the Contini Bonacossi collection since at least 1924 as reported by Bode, came up for auction at Christie's London "Old Masters and British paintings. Evening Sale", 2 July 2013, sale n. 1136, lot. n. 32.

<sup>233</sup>Bargellini, 1981, 128-132.

now attributed to Veronese directly from the Fratelli Volterra Firm, which according to the entry on the website of the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, owned the canvases in 1929. Both were sold by Contini Bonacossi in 1930 to Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes, who donated them to the museum in 1964.<sup>234</sup>

In 1934, Gualtiero Volterra made his official debut in Contini Bonacossi's circle with his first documented purchase on the Count's behalf. Volterra played a big role in Contini Bonacossi's business during the mid 1930s and especially after the Second World War, which dried up the art market and severed ties among dealers and collectors. To explain Volterra's presence (why him and why him at this time) in Contini Bonacossi's activities during these years, I will highlight a few details of his biography. Because Volterra was born into a family of art dealers, he was very familiar with the art trade. And his international life as a concert soloist helped him make connections in the highest ranks of European society. His Swiss residence (before the war) and his familiarity with the London art market made him an invaluable figure for the Count.

Volterra was born in 1901 in Italy and graduated from the Florence Conservatory at the age of thirteen. By the age of twenty-one, he was playing in Berlin and soon began touring Europe as a solo pianist. In Italy he met his wife, the Australian Patricia Kerry, and in 1928 in London they had their first and only child, Sara (Tatia). Because of his Jewish origins, Volterra found life in Fascist Italy to be increasingly difficult. As Gregorio Nardi discusses this problem in his essay *The "Aryanization" of Italian Musical Life* published in 2009 on the Orel Foundation website.

For musicians, the first disquieting signal came at the end of 1933 in the form of a ban on radio broadcasts of pieces by Jewish composers....It was in 1936 that specifically racist policies were set forth in circles close to the government. These were consolidated in 1938 with the promulgation of the so-called Racial Laws, which precipitated the situation. People "belonging to the Hebrew race" were expelled from all public positions. Jewish performers were banned from concert halls, as were works by Jewish composers.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup>Museum of Fine Art Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/allegorical-figure-of-charity-33890> [access 22 July 2016], <http://educators.mfa.org/node/20826> [access 22 July 2016].

<sup>235</sup>Nardi, 2009.

Because of the issues with his Jewish origin, Volterra fled Italy, settling first in Paris. Presumably in the mid 1930s in Switzerland, he started occasionally buying artworks on behalf of Contini Bonacossi.<sup>236</sup> Between 1930 and 1939, there are five documented purchases Volterra made in England on behalf of the Count, four coming from the London art market (through Christie's, Colnaghi, and Agnew), and one through the Parisian dealer Rene Gimpel: Giovanni Bellini's *Portrait of a Man*, bought from Agnew in 1934, now at the Portland Art Museum (no. 61.33); a follower of Pietro Perugino's *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, bought in 1939 at Christie's London and now at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, (fig 86); a contemporary of Duccio's *Madonna and Child with Saints and the Crucifixion*, now at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, (61.200); the already mentioned anonymous panel by a Tuscan painter from the thirteenth century, *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter, and Two Angels*, bought in 1935 from Colnaghi, now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, (1952.5.60); and, from Gimpel, Girolamo di Benvenuto's *Madonna and Child*, Denver Art Museum (1961.171).<sup>237</sup> All the paintings were bought clearly to fulfill his client Kress's vision; they entered his collection right after Contini Bonacossi's purchase.

After World War II broke out in 1939, Volterra decided to move to Australia, his wife's home country, hoping to avoid the discrimination the couple had experienced in Europe.<sup>238</sup> Thanks to the doctoral dissertation by Maria Glaros, we know the details of his flight and of his life as part of Australian society, which unfortunately did not turn out to be as tolerant as they hoped, as is well documented by Glaros.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup>Glaros, 2012, 337.

<sup>237</sup>The provenance information regarding the paintings bought by Volterra on behalf of Contini Bonacossi and then sold to Kress comes from the Archives of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in New York, NY. The paintings Volterra bought at auction at Christies are the following: Shapley, vol I, I. 15. Fig. 25 (K1289), Shapley, vol. I, 5, Fig. 9 (K1549), Shapley, II, 47, Fig. 101 (K370); Shapley, II, 99, Fig. 238 (K498). The painting bought from Gimpel is Girolamo di Benvenuto "A *Miracle of Saint Catherine of Siena*", Denver Art Museum, 1961.171; Shapley, vol. I, 163, Fig. 440 (K1295): III, 387.

<sup>238</sup>It was Patricia's father, Thomas Herber Kelly, a prominent business person with political ties that applied for the entry permit on behalf of his daughter and her family allowing them to settle in Australia during Wartime. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kelly-thomas-herbert-6924> [access 5 July 2016].

<sup>239</sup>Glaros, 2012, 337-342.



In 1946, Volterra and his family returned to Italy, re-engaging with Contini Bonacossi to the benefit of both men. At that time (as will be discussed later in connection with his relationship with the Kress Foundation while it was run by Samuel Kress's brother Rush), Contini Bonacossi was in financial distress, partially due to the heavy taxes put in place by the Italian government to pay war debts. He needed works of art to generate cash flow. Due to legislation implemented after the war that forced Contini Bonacossi to give up pieces housed in his Florentine villa, he needed to scout the market outside Italy to avoid bureaucratic obstacles that would have delayed his deals or put them on hold. Working for the Count, Volterra perused auctions, monitored the art market in London, and helped with dealings with clients overseas. He proved himself to be up to the task. In 1948, he purchased on the Count's behalf Giovanni dal Ponte's *Madonna and Child with Angels* (since 1961 at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 61.44.5) and, in 1949, Neri di Bicci's *Saint Anthony Abbot*, now at the Denver Art Museum, (1961.164). The perfect deal, however, arrived when the prestigious Cook Collection at Doughty House was finally made available for sale around 1945-46. As mentioned by Elon Danziger,

Kaines Smith began inviting enquiries from the swarm of dealers who had for so long knocked on Doughty House's door, including Contini Bonacossi, Seligmann, Drey, Agnew, Duveen and Rosenberg & Stiebel. Once he felt the price offered was high enough, he sold, and two hundred and forty two paintings had left the collection by 1952. The most important buyer was the foundation formed by Samuel H. Kress [...], mostly through Contini Bonacossi.<sup>240</sup>

As we learn from the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC curatorial files of the works bought for Kress from the Cook Collection, Contini Bonacossi sent Gualtiero Volterra to Doughty House to finalize the sales on his behalf between 1947 and 1948.<sup>241</sup> They were included in two offers the Kress Foundation made to Contini Bonacossi. The first on 7 June 1948 (accepted on 11 July 1948) comprised twenty-eight paintings, included these Cook paintings now part of the National Gallery of

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<sup>240</sup>Danziger, 2004, 457.

<sup>241</sup>Curatorial Records and Files (DCRF), National Gallery of Art correspondence from the Cook Collection Archive in care of John Somerville, England. Volterra was Contini Bonacossi's agent in London. The information is on the museum online collection as well and easily accessible through the museum website.

Art in Washington DC as donated by the Kress Foundation: Titian, *Ranuccio Farnese*, (1952.2.11); Vincenzo Foppa, *Saint Anthony of Padua* (1952.5.63); Andrea Mantegna, *The Infant Savior* (1952.5.67); Luca Signorelli, *The Crucifixion* (1952.5.75); Bacchiacca, *The Flagellation of Christ* (1952.5.81); Vincenzo Foppa, *Saint Bernardino of Siena* (1961.9.72).<sup>242</sup> The second was made on 4 March 1949 (accepted on 10 March 1949) for twenty-one paintings. It included the following works that are now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC: Giovanni Bellini, *An Episode from the Life of Publius Cornelius Scipio* (1952.2.7); Antonio Maria Vassallo, *The Larder* (1961.9.91) (at the time bought and donated as Velazquez); Perino del Vaga, *The Nativity* (1961.9.31); and Annibale Carracci, *Venus Adorned by the Graces* (1961.9.9) (fig. 79).<sup>243</sup> The purchase of Carracci's *Venus* is of particular interest, as it was the first Carracci painting to enter the Kress Collection. Italian Baroque as a genre struggled to find amateurs and admirers in the United States as well as in Europe. Highly sought after at the end of the nineteenth century, it fell completely out of favor in the first part of the twentieth. Only after the war did interest revive. By 1930, as a result of flourishing studies in Europe at the turn of the century aimed at the critical and historical rehabilitation of Baroque art, the United States also started to get interested in the period. This was expressed in exhibitions organized by antique dealers like Durlacher Brothers of New York, Ehrich Gallery, Arnold Seligman and Rey, Kleinberger & Co; these dealers also collaborated with Italian scholars such as Lionello Venturi. However, it was not until the 1940s that this tendency began really to grow in America.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup>National Gallery of Art, Washington DC: 1952.2.11: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41593.html>; 1952.5.63: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41678.html>; 1952.5.67: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41682.html>; 1952.5.75: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41690.html>; 1952.5.81: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41696.html>; 1961.9.72: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46171.html>. [Access 6 July 2016].

<sup>243</sup> National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC: 1952.2.7: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.41589.html>; 1961.9.91: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46190.html>; 1961.9.31: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46190.html>; 1961.9.9: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46108.html>. [Access 6 July 2016].

<sup>244</sup>Zaninelli, 2008; 2018.

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This chapter has shown the relevance of Contini Bonacossi on the international stage and clarified how he was able to develop business relationships with the most important international dealers. It was this that enabled him to place thousands of objects in public and private collections throughout America, through transactions and negotiations detailed in the next chapter.

## Chapter II: Contini Bonacossi's Business

Everything is worth what its purchaser will pay for it.<sup>245</sup>

In recent years, the history of the art market has been the subject of considerable research and scholarship. Yet despite the increasing availability of significant resources, collecting and identifying works of art in a dealer's inventory is a daunting process. As Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich argue in their book *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London 1850-1939*, one of the major challenges of studying the art market is 'the scattered and sometimes obscured nature of available data.'<sup>246</sup>Contini Bonacossi's case exemplifies this statement: he never owned a commercial art gallery, and business ledgers documenting his transactions cannot be found. Indeed, until recently, no purchase information of the artworks he exchanged was known.<sup>247</sup>The volume of Contini Bonacossi's dealings though, as well as the prominence of his sources and clients, was such that traces of his transactions are sprinkled throughout the archives of famous dealers and collectors across the world. Recently, most of these dealers' stock books and inventories have made their way

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<sup>245</sup>*The Moral sayings of Publius Syrus, a Roman Slave*, translation by D. Lyman, Boston, 1856, 47.

<sup>246</sup>Fletcher-Helmreich, 2011, 12.

<sup>247</sup>My research performed during 2009-2015 for two important projects related to the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, unearthed new important information on Contini Bonacossi's network and transactions. I am referring to the Samuel Henry Kress Collection Provenance Research Project and the Samuel H. Kress Collection Archives and Conservation Project (both funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in New York and based at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. The results of the first project are featured on the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation website. <http://www.kressfoundation.org/provenance/> [access 14 June 2016]. For general information related to best practice for provenance research: Yeide, Akinsha, Walsh, 2001. Although numerous artifacts are listed in secondary sources as part of the Contini Bonacossi inventory (for example, the Zeri Foundation photoarchive, catalogue raisonnées, and various lists compiled by his heirs), evidence of Contini Bonacossi's purchases –like bills of sales- in most cases is not supported by documentary proof. The impossibility of defining the nature of his transactions urges caution in listing objects as part of Contini Bonacossi's property. For a quite large number of artifacts (paintings, sculptures, furniture, drawings, carpets and dellaRobbia) listed in secondary sources (for example, the Zeri Foundation photoarchive, catalogue raisonnées, and various lists compiled by his heirs) indicating the Contini Bonacossi collection as a possible location or in their ownership histories, evidence of Contini Bonacossi's purchase or legal title is still lacking. The difficulties in locating transactions related to every object stands as a warning and urges caution in listing them as part of Contini Bonacossi's property.

into the public domain making it possible to partially document Contini Bonacossi's business.

In almost every instance, information gathered from the business records of dealers who traded with Contini Bonacossi (as well as from various archival sources such as correspondence and memoirs) shows that his *modus operandi* in the resale art market was the private sale. Unlike records of transactions that occur through auction houses, which are usually preserved, records documenting a private sale are remarkably scarce. This is because these transactions were veiled within social, cultural and intellectual exchange. As Mark Westgarth wrote in his essay about the London picture trade around 1850, prices and sales were often invisible. This statement also applies to later decades.

In this market, the picture dealer was in a privileged position. A whole range of personal and individual transactions that took place in the shops and galleries of the trade were left invisible to the new consumer. In this "hidden" market transactions that took place between dealers and collectors and between dealers and dealers left the prices paid for the pictures locked within a series of discrete relationships. [...] the majority of consumers could not have 'inside' knowledge of the art market of the picture dealers.<sup>248</sup>

A rare example of a documented private sale involves a painting by Raffaellino del Garbo, *Madonna Enthroned with Saints and Angels*, now in the permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts after being donated by Kress to the museum in 1961 (61.44.12) (fig. 15).<sup>249</sup> The painting's provenance can be found in a formal request by the shipper Ciolli for an export permit on behalf of Contini Bonacossi on 31 March 1940. His request was made to the Ministry of Education in Rome (which at the time oversaw Italian cultural heritage). The paperwork attached to the export request (granted on 3 May 1940) reported the painting's provenance history (figs. 16-17).

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<sup>248</sup>Westgarth, 2011, 40.

<sup>249</sup><http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&artistID=20834> [access 27 July 2016].

31 Marzo 1940

Lo spedizioniere Ciolli di Firenze per incarico del Senatore Conte Alessandro Contini Bonacossi ha presentato la domanda di esportazione di un dipinto su tavola di Raffaellino del Garbo, per il valore dichiarato di lire centomila. Il dipinto su tavola [...] un tempo era sull'altare della Cappella Corsini nel chiostro di Santo Spirito, [...], ritirato di là nel 1875 dai patroni della Cappella stette esposta nella Galleria Corsini nel palazzo di Parione (Firenze) e nelle divisioni avvenute fra i componenti di quella famiglia, dopo la morte del senatore Principe Don Tommaso Corsini, passo alla contessa Beatrice Pandolfini, a cui fu notificato d'importante interesse in data 19 Settembre 1927. **La contessa Pandolfini lo vendette qualche mese fa al senatore Conte Contini a cui fu rinnovata la notifica in data 26 Dicembre 1939.** [...] Questa Sovrintendenza [Florence] non ritiene che l'importanza del dipinto possa giustificare l'imposizione del divieto di esportazione ai sensi dell'articolo 35 della legge del 1 Giugno 1939 n. 1089, ne crede di poter consigliare l'esercizio del diritto di prelazione al Ministero. [...] Trattandosi di un'opera d'arte il cui interesse particolarmente importante è stato regolarmente notificato al proprietario, si rimette la richiesta di esportazione al decisione di codesto ministero.<sup>250</sup>

Due to the international dimension of Contini Bonacossi's trade, information about his activities can be traced in a variety of archival sources preserved in museums and archives in the United States and in Europe. Correspondence among dealers and collectors, memoirs, lists compiled by art historians or family members, statements of expertise, bills of sale, export licenses, and condition reports revealed anet of individuals and firms interacting and trading with Contini Bonacossi that has been invisible until now. The legacy of European dealers in the shaping of private and public collections, and in bringing Old Masters works to the New World, is evident in the permanent collections of numerous prestigious American institutions. As Peter Watson recalls, "in the earliest years of the new century [20th century], the leading auctioneers of the world played second fiddle to the dealers."<sup>251</sup>As well argued by Retlinger and Watson, virtually every dealer of the time had agents in Italy looking for masterpieces. These statements imply a predominance of private sales as a method of exchange. Although, as already discussed, it was illegal to export Old Masters works without an export permit (as per a 1902 Italian law) this did not stop

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<sup>250</sup>ACS, AABBA (1929-60) Divisione III, Affari Generali, busta n. 258.

<sup>251</sup>Watson, 1992, 164.

the market.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, it is useful to remember that it was around this time that Joseph Duveen (1869-1939), probably the most famous and successful art dealer of all time, made his debut.<sup>253</sup>

In the secondary market, Contini Bonacossi operated primarily by private sale. Although he occasionally attended auctions, if only for his own purchases, this research did not find evidence of him relying on the auction market to sell his merchandise. As Ernest Duveen confirmed in a letter from 3 February 1926 reporting on multiple visits he paid to Contini Bonacossi in Rome in 1925 and 1926, “he buys chiefly from other dealers, so naturally he pays expensively.”<sup>254</sup>

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Before analyzing Contini Bonacossi’s network, it is important to highlight three key concepts that underline this chapter: market, value, and provenance. In their study about the development of the art market in England during 1730-1900, Thomas Bayer and John Page give the reader a useful definition of market:

a framework within which owners of property rights make contact with one another for transferring ownership, usually for money. It is not a monolithic,

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<sup>252</sup>For example, the British art historian, painter and dealer Charles Fairfax Murray [1849-1919], whose business relationship with the then director of the National Gallery of Art in London, Sir Frederick Burton, has been recently brought to light by the analysis of their correspondence by Del Lungo Camiciotti, 2012, 105-120.

<sup>253</sup>Duveen was raised to the peerage as Baron Duveen of Millbank in the City of Westminster, on 3 February 1933. *The London Gazette*, n.33909, 825, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/33909/page/825>. [Access 1 August 2016]. The original papers of the Duveen firm are held at the Getty Research Center in Los Angeles. Archival copies on microfilm of the entire Duveen firm are available at the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. The literature about the Duveen Brothers and his partnership with the art scholar Bernard Berenson is substantial, and especially after its archives made their way into the public domain in 2000. Cohen, 2013, notes that the scholar “signed” with Duveen in 1912, in the middle of what have been described by many as the first of the “miracle years for the art market” 1910-1914. The Berenson-Duveen partnership started in full force. The unique combination of business cleverness and scholarly brilliance made them wealthy and powerful, indeed ‘only Duveen got ennobled and only Duveen had Berenson’.

<sup>254</sup>Letter from Earnst Duveen to Duveen Brothers New York, 3 February 1926. Duveen Brothers Records, 1876-1981 (bulk 1909-1964). Series II. Correspondence and Papers. Series II.A. Files regarding works of art, Box 232, folder 48, reel 87. Getty Research Institute.

tangible structure but a mechanism composed of different parts all intended to facilitate this transfer of ownership of property rights.<sup>255</sup>

Arjun Appaduraj, in his book *The Social Life of Things*, helpfully argues that it is this economic exchange which creates the value of objects circulating in a specific cultural milieu.<sup>256</sup>

The International Foundation for Art Research defines provenance within the framework of the art market: the provenance of an artwork is the historical record of its ownership.<sup>257</sup> An established provenance can show proof of ownership if legal title is contested and it can add to a work's value.<sup>258</sup> An ideal provenance provides the owner's name, dates of ownership, means of transfer (such as inheritance or sale through a dealer, auction, or collector) and the work's locations from its creation to the present day. Unfortunately, such complete records are very rare, and most works of art have gaps in their provenances, so to find a work with an unbroken record of ownership is remarkable.

In sum, in this chapter, I present seminal documentary evidence of Contini Bonacossi's dealings in the secondary market connected to the practice of private collecting. Due to the lack of a comprehensive archive of Contini Bonacossi's trading, what follows can not be an exhaustive recollection of all his transactions. Nonetheless, the following sections based on my original research presented here for the first time, are of seminal importance as they provide rare evidence of the direct

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<sup>255</sup>Bayer and Page, 2011, 288.

<sup>256</sup>Appaduraj, 2013.

<sup>257</sup>International Foundation for Art Research (IFAR): [https://www.ifar.org/provenance\\_guide.php](https://www.ifar.org/provenance_guide.php) [Access on 13 May 2016].

<sup>258</sup>This information can take many forms: a signed certificate of authenticity from an expert or the artist himself, a custom stamp or a wax seal on the back of the painting, a dealer receipt, an inventory record, auction sales and catalogues, archival material, correspondence, catalogues raisonnées and more recently, online databases.



transfer of artworks between Contini Bonacossi and their previous, as well as their subsequent owners.<sup>259</sup>

## International Suppliers

### *Galerie Heinemann*

Galerie Heinemann was founded in Munich in 1872 by David Heinemann (1819-1902). It was among the first and most important art dealerships in Germany until its "Aryanization" in 1939. The gallery also had branches in Frankfurt, Nice, New York, and Lucerne, where Galerie Hansen A.G. operated as Heinemann's subsidiary gallery.<sup>260</sup> Specializing in 18th and 19th century German art, Galerie Heinemann also traded in English, French, and Spanish art. An unpublished letter from Contini Bonacossi to Dr. Bode dated 4 December 1924 is the earliest documentary evidence of the collaboration between the Italian dealer and the German firm. In his letter, Contini Bonacossi informs the scholar of purchases he made a few days before in Lucerne, where he visited Heinemann.

Roma, 4 Dicembre 1924

Il mio viaggio a Lucerna è stato molto profittevole per la mia raccolta. Ho comprato da Heinemann un bel ritrattino di Goya del periodo medio.<sup>261</sup>

The Goya portrait referenced by Contini Bonacossi could be the copy or the version of the copy of *Portrait of the Infant Maria Luisa and Her Son* now hanging at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and donated by Theodor Davis in 1915 (30.95.243).

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<sup>259</sup>Wilhelm von Bode, Roberto Longhi, Adolfo Venturi, Giorgio Gronau, Baron Detlev von Hadeln, Conte Carlo Gamba were among the very first scholars Contini Bonacossi relied on, as he reported in his correspondence with Bode

<sup>260</sup><http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/history-of-the-galerie-heinemann.html>. And <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/search.html>. The entire gallery archive has been digitized and available online. <http://www.lootedart.com/P43T03791231>. For bibliographic reference about Theobald Heinemann and his wife who managed the gallery after David Heinemann's death, see: [http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=200#\\_ftn9](http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=200#_ftn9) [access 28 July 2016].

<sup>261</sup> Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 4 December 1924, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

(fig.18).<sup>262</sup> The Metropolitan Museum entry indicates the existence of “another weak copy or version of this portrait once in the collection of Baron Edmond de Rothschild. In 1937 this copy was exhibited at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, (no. 19), as the property of Dr. Franz Herbert Hirschland”.<sup>263</sup> It was Heinemann who sold this “weak copy” to the Baron Edmund Rothschild on 12 August 1912. A note on the Heinemann stock card identifies the painting as belonging to Contini Bonacossi before 1937, the year the work was exhibited at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco as part of the collection of Dr. Hirschland. No more information can be found in the Heinemann archive regarding Contini Bonacossi’s purchase of this work. Nonetheless, the note naming Contini Bonacossi as “vorher” (owner), as well as the date of the temporary import license to Italy 12 December 1924 requested by the Italian dealer (license n. 618), would reinforce the idea that the Rothschild version is the same work referred to by Contini Bonacossi in his letter to Bode. Probably Heinemann played a role, which would explain the information on the work’s stock card.

Contini Bonacossi remained a customer of Galerie Heinemann during the following years. Between 1930-33 the purchase of seven paintings can be documented. Interestingly, among the seven paintings, only two belong to the Italian Renaissance; both came from the Leuchtenberg collection. J. Adler sold Lorenzo Lotto’s *Saint Catherine* to Heinemann on 8 February 1933 for 21,000 marcs; the work was resold to Contini Bonacossi for 28,500 marcs a few days later, on 20 February 1933 (fig. 19). On 22 September 1933, Contini Bonacossi bought Bernardino Luini’s “*Madonna of the Carnation*” for 20500 Swiss Francs on 30 October 1933 (fig. 20). Shortly after Contini Bonacossi’s purchase, both works were sold to Kress, in 1933 the Lotto and the Luini on 27 December 1934. Both paintings are in the permanent

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<sup>262</sup>Copy after Goya, *Infanta María Luisa (1782–1824) and Her Son Carlos Luis (1799–1883)*, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436550?sortBy=Relevance&ft=30.95.243&p;offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1> [access 18 April 2017].

<sup>263</sup>Copy after Goya, *Infanta María Luisa (1782–1824) and her Son Carlos Luis (1799–1883)*, *Notes:* <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436550> [access 17-5-2016].

collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC after being donated by Kress in 1939.<sup>264</sup>

The other five canvases belong to the Spanish School, another area of expertise for Galerie Heinemann. Contini Bonacossi bought Goya's *Saint Ambrose* on 21 March 1930; it has been part of the Cleveland Museum of Art permanent collection since the 1950s (fig.21).<sup>265</sup> On 3 April 1930 he bought *Bullfight* by Eugenio Lucas y Villamil for 6000 Swiss francs (SF).<sup>266</sup> On 15 April 1933 Contini Bonacossi bought two works: one by Eugenio Lucas y Lucas Villamil, *Corrida in a Spanish Village*, and one by Eugenio Lucas y Padilla (1817-1870), *Fair*, from the Leiffmann Collection in Dusseldorf, for 4200 Swiss Francs.<sup>267</sup> A work by Francisco Bayeu y Subías, *Spaziergang (Herr und Dame) im Hintergrund des Madrider Schloß*, was bought by Heinemann from the Frey Collection on 16 May 1929 for 1000 marcs. Authenticated by August Meyer, it was then sold to Contini Bonacossi on 6 March 1930 for 3341,60 marcs.<sup>268</sup>

In the light of the transactions reported here for the first time, it is interesting to note that most of the works traded belonged to the Spanish school. Although it was an area of expertise for Heinemann, the Spanish school was not well represented in Italian collections of the time. To gain appreciation of this school, Contini Bonacossi

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<sup>264</sup>Galerie Heinemann n. 18964, <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-6870.htm>; <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.258.html>, National Gallery of Art n. 1939.1.117. Galerie Heinemann n. 18999 <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-6917.htm>, National Gallery of Art accession number 1939.1.152, <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.293.html>.

<sup>265</sup><http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1969.23#art-object-detail-views>; Longhi-Mayer, 1930, 24; Porcella, 1930, 25; De Angelis, 1974, n. 324.

<sup>266</sup><http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-6899.htm>, Heinemann n. 18390.

<sup>267</sup><http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-6900.htm>, Heinemann n. 18955 was given on commission to Contini Bonacossi on 12 November 1932 for 3200 Swiss francs; and <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-6901.htm>, Heinemann n. 18956 on commission on 20 February 1933 for 1900 marks. The painter was known as Eugenio Lucas y Velazquez and was the father of Eugenio Lucas y Villamil [1858-1918] as reported by Union List of Artists Names, ULAN, The Getty Research Institute <http://www.getty.edu/vow/ULANServlet?english=Y&find=eugenio+lucas+y+padilla&role=&page=1&nation=>; Longhi-Mayer, 1930, 30-31.

<sup>268</sup>Galerie Heinemann <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/search.html>. Longhi-Mayer, 1930, 17.

was certainly in an advantageous position, having lived in Spain for many years. Two other factors may have contributed to this: his close association with Longhi, a pioneer in the studies of the Seicento (particularly showing that the *siglo de oro* owed much to Northern Italian painters and the *manieristi riformati*) and, secondly, the *fortunae* Spanish painters enjoyed abroad, might explain this preponderance.<sup>269</sup>

*Kunsthandel A.G.: Julius Böhler and Fritz Steinmeyer*

In 1920 in Lucerne, Julius Wilhelm Böhler (183-1966), oldest son of the prominent German art dealer Julius Böhler, and Fritz Steinmeyer founded Böhler and Steinmeyer, also known as Kunsthandel A.G. Luzern. Contini Bonacossi, a loyal customer of the firm since its early years, established a relationship that lasted until after the Second World War., By cross-referencing information drawn from the Bode-Contini Bonacossi correspondence, Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's memoirs, and Böhler stock cards, we can document the purchase of at least ten paintings (Italian, Dutch, and Spanish) between 1924 and 1948 by Contini Bonacossi from Böhler and Steinmeyer. Four occurred in 1924, two in 1925, two in 1927, and one in 1937.<sup>270</sup>

Il mio viaggio a Lucerna e stato molto profittevole [...] ho comprato dal simpatico Lulu Böhler un bellissimo ritratto di Van Dyck del periodo genovese-di cui ella mi faceva giustamente rilevare la mancanza- un altro ritratto di Goya, un magnifico Paolo Veronese and “last but not least” un bellissimo Rembrandt “Giuda che porta le monete d’argento”. Questo quadro mi fece appena lo vidi un effetto portentoso in paragone del quadro su tela dello stesso soggetto esistente nella collezione del Barone Von Schickler di Parigi. Quando poi seppi che ella giustamente lo considerava l’originale dei due, non esitai un momento ad acquistarlo ne sono orgoglioso e felice perchè a me sembra una delle opere più magistrali del primo periodo dell’artista. Ho dato l’incarico al Bohler di procurarmi pure ancora un bell’esempio del

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<sup>269</sup>For the new interest by Italian scholars in the Italian Seicento, see Mazzocca, 1975, 837-901; Mazzanti, Mannini and Gensini, 2011; Longhi, 1961, I, 493-495. On collecting Spanish art of the *siglo de Oro* in the United States, see Reist-Colomer, 2012.

<sup>270</sup>Three other paintings with a Böhler provenance prior to Contini Bonacossi are registered in the Kress archives: Canaletto *View of the Gran Canal*, Birmingham Museum of Art, 1961.121 (K1806) as stated on the Kress Foundation website in the entries related to these works, the nature of these transactions has not been possible to clarify. Unlike for the other ten paintings (and for all the works mentioned in this chapter), for these three works no evidence of a direct transaction has been unearthed in the Böhler papers at this date. For these reasons, these works have not been included in the list of paintings we know Contini Bonacossi purchased from Böhler. This approach is used systematically for all the works of art involved in the same circumstances.

periodo medio dell'artista ed altro possibilmente dell'ultimo. Se mi fara, come spero, delle offerte mi permetterò di consultarla prima di prendere una decisione. Per il Giuda vorrei pregarla di farmi avere una sua letterina nella quale mi confermasse la sua opinione.<sup>271</sup>

The Paolo Veronese in question could be the *Portrait of Count Giuseppe da Porto with his son Adrian* now part of the Uffizi Collection, while the portrait by Goya remains an open question (fig. 26).<sup>272</sup> The Rembrandt has already been discussed in chapter I, and the Van Dyck, *Portrait of a Lady in a Black Dress*, has been well documented: bought from Böhler on 31 December 1924, it is a fine example of Van Dyck's Italian period. Contini Bonacossi sold the work to Reinhardt of New York in 1927, who subsequently sold it to Simon Guggenheim in 1931. The painting was one of several works given by the Guggenheims to the Denver Museum of Art in 1962. Deaccessioned by the museum in 2010, it was sold at auction at Christie's New York on 27 January 2010 (sale n. 2282, lot n. 325). Its last known location is the London gallery of Philip Mould (fig. 27).<sup>273</sup> Although not mentioned in this letter, another important work, *Saint Francis' Stigmata* by Domenico Veneziano, was purchased in 1924. Once part of the altarpiece at the church of Santa Lucia dei Magnoli in Florence, it was purchased from Böhler and published by Roberto Longhi.<sup>274</sup> The work was then sold by the Count to Kress, who donated it to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC in 1939 (fig. 28).

Roma, 15 Febbraio 1925

[...] Ho avuto una visita fugace di Lulu Böhler, sufficiente pero per permettermi di acquistargli ancora un bel quadro di El Greco, il terzo della mia collezione, cui non é improbabile che venga ad aggiungersi un quarto. Böhler é rimasto molto impressionato dei miei oggetti, per quanto ella molto

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<sup>271</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 4 December 1924, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1.

<sup>272</sup>This transaction can not be identified in the Böhler archive. Thanks to Bode's comments about the Contini collection in Rome from 1924, we know the painting was already part of his holdings at that time. According to Salomon, 2009,816, the portrait was first mentioned in a 1913 catalogue in the Sedelmeyer Gallery at 6 Rue de la Rochefoucauld, Paris. The Sedelmeyer Records are no known to exist, but it is well known that Böhler, like many and most of the prominent dealer of the time, were frequent customers of the Parisian dealer.

<sup>273</sup><http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=1390&Desc=Lady-in-a-Black-Dress-%7C-Sir-Anthony-Van-Dyck> [access 14 June 2016].

<sup>274</sup>Longhi, 1925, 31-35.

benevolmente lo avesse già informato. [...] Longhi si é messo a lavorare seriamente come potra vedere dai suoi ultimi articoli su *L'Arte*, in cui descrive il mio Domenico Veneziano e quattro nuovi Tiziano. Presto partorirá anche l'articolo su di lei.<sup>275</sup>

The painting by El Greco mentioned by Contini Bonacossi is *Agony in the Garden*, which was sold at a Christie's sale in New York on 9 June 2010, lot. n. 256.<sup>276</sup> The painting, temporarily imported to Italy on 17 March 1925, remained in Contini Bonacossi's stock until his death, after which it was probably sold by his heirs through the private dealer Stanley Moss.<sup>277</sup> Together with the El Greco, in 1925 Contini Bonacossi purchased *Saint Margaret*, at the time attributed to Ugolino da Siena (fig. 29). The painting was then sold by Contini Bonacossi to Kress in 1937. Donated to the National Gallery of Art by Kress in 1939, it was deaccessioned by the museum in 1952 and returned to Kress. In 1961 it was given by Kress Foundation to the Portland Museum of Art.

In 1927, during his stay in New York City, Contini Bonacossi bought two noteworthy paintings that ended up, through different paths, at two of the most prestigious museums in the United States.

13 Gennaio 1927, New York City

Siamo stati oggi da tre negozianti, uno il Sig. Steinmeyer, l'altro il Sig. Knoedler & Co. E l'ultimo Durlacher & Bros. Dal primo abbiamo comprato un bel Savoldo ed un bel Dosso Dossi, dal secondo ci sono ancora due o tre quadri che c'interessano, vedremo domani.<sup>278</sup>

The painting by Giovan Girolamo Savoldo is *Shepherd with a Flute*, which was temporarily imported to Italy on 27 April 1927 by the Tartaglia firm on behalf of Contini Bonacossi (license n. 122). The painting stayed in the Count's collection in

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<sup>275</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 15 February 1925, SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304. 6.1.1.

<sup>276</sup>“Old Masters and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Art including selected works from the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries”, Christie's, New York, 9 June 2010.

<sup>277</sup>According to the files I obtained from the Salander Galleries in 2006, Moss also traded or gave on commission to Salander other two Spanish paintings (Murillo *Caballero*, and the Goya *Five Heads*) he had on commission from the Contini Bonacossi's heirs.

<sup>278</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 94.

Florence until his death; it was sold by his heir in 1970s to Eugene Victor Thaw, a renowned art dealer and collector in New York City (fig. 30).<sup>279</sup> Since 1985, it has been part of the permanent collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum.<sup>280</sup> The second painting, *Aeneas and Achates on the Libyan Coast* by the Ferrarese artist Dosso Dossi, was bought by Contini Bonacossi on February 1927 in New York. It was later sold by the Count to Samuel Kress who donated it to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC in 1939 (fig. 31).<sup>281</sup> Four other paintings may have been bought by Contini Bonacossi from Böhler between 1931 and 1948, ending up shortly after in the Kress collection.

### *Kleinberger Galleries*

Franz Kleinberger founded Kleinberger Galleries in Paris in 1848. The gallery remained active until 1973.<sup>282</sup> Like Knoedler, the Kleinberger Galleries played an important role in the trade of European painting in the United States, especially after 1913, when the firm opened a branch in New York City on Fifth Avenue next door to one of its closest allies, Duveen Galleries. It is probably because of its close relationship with Böhler and Steinmeyer, and because of its prominence in the Old Masters trade, that Kleinberger was connected to Contini Bonacossi in a few instances.

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<sup>279</sup>Böhler stock card n. 6406. The sale was finalized on 18 May 1927. Contini paid USD 5.500. A native of New York City, Thaw was amongst the most well known Manhattan art dealers of his generation. His private collection of master drawings is a promised gift to the Morgan Library and Museum of New York, where he serves on the Board of Trustees. See Archives of American Art Oral History Program, Smithsonian Institution: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-eugene-v-thaw-13687> [access 16/6/2016]; <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/24/arts/art-architecture-a-collector-who-can-let-go-of-his-treasures.html?pagewanted=all>. [Access 16/6/2016] and biography on the museum website: <https://www.themorgan.org/sites/default/files/pdf/press/ThawVBio.pdf> [access 16 June 2016].

<sup>280</sup>See: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/763/giovanni-girolamo-savoldo-shepherd-with-a-flute-italian-about-1525/> [access 16 June 2016].

<sup>281</sup>According to: Inventory card no. 55 26, Böhler records, Getty Research Institute, Special Collections. National Gallery of Art, n. 1939.1.250 (K448): <https://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg17/gg17-391-prov.html> [access 16 June 2016].

<sup>282</sup>Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America, “*F. Kleinberger Galleries (New York, N.Y.)*”. <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6346> [access 16 June 2016].

As confirmed by Vittoria,

11 Gennaio 1927

Ore 24 Abbiamo visitato un negoziante di qui, il Sig. Kleinberger, ma non ha nulla per noi (meno male).<sup>283</sup>

Despite Vittoria's negative comment about Kleinberger's stock, the sale of a couple of paintings is recorded in Vittoria's diary and, for at least one of them, in the Kleinberger archives.

10 Febbraio 1927 New York

Ore 9.30 Cari del mio cuore. Papà è di là che si guarda un bel ritrattino e un altro ritratto di una dama con la sua bambina di Cornelius de Vos, che abbiamo comprato a buonissime condizioni.<sup>284</sup>

On 26 January 1927 Contini Bonacossi bought a painting by Cornelius de Vos, *A Portrait of a Lady with a Little Girl*, which he sold to Kress on 4 March 1932. Kress donated the work in 1961 to the Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco (fig. 32).<sup>285</sup> The other painting, the little portrait, (*bel ritrattino*) could be identified as Biagio d'Antonio *Portrait of a boy* (National Gallery of Art 1939.1.179). Although I could not identify a reference of this purchase in the Kleinberger stock cards, a written opinion by Roberto Longhi to Contini Bonacossi dated October 1929 indicates the presence of this work in Contini Bonacossi's stock. The portrait was sold by Contini Bonacossi with the vague attribution of Florentine painter to Samuel H. Kress on 26 June 1935, who eventually donated it to the National Gallery of Art in 1939.<sup>286</sup> The other work was Giovanni Bellini's *Portrait of Jorg Fugger*, bought from Kleinberger on 17 May 1928 for 40,000 USD (fig. 33).<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 91.

<sup>284</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 140.

<sup>285</sup>Kleinberger Gallery stock card no. 15586, Department of European Paintings, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

<sup>286</sup>For a complete provenance record, see <https://www.nga.gov/Collection/art-object-page.320.html>.

<sup>287</sup><http://www.nortonsimonartfoundation.org/collections/provenance.php?id=M.1969.13.P>. The portrait stayed in the family collection until the Count's death and was later sold by his heirs to the American collector Norton Simon for his museum. Other two works that were later sold to Kress indicate Kleinberger as a prior owner to Contini Bonacossi. They are Jacopo del Sellaio *the Adoration*



During his trips to the United States, Contini Bonacossi aimed not only at incrementing his stock, but also at expanding his client portfolio. As we learn from his wife's memoirs, it was not uncommon for him to ship crates full of artworks from Italy to US during his frequent trips there.

24 Febbraio 1927 New York

Sono quasi ferita, papà va qui vicino dal Kleinberger, gli ha dato in commissione il Velazquez (dice di avere un cliente, speriamo).<sup>288</sup>

Ultimately, Kleinberger did not close this deal on behalf of Contini Bonacossi. The Velazquez was instead sold by Contini Bonacossi to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston through Edward Holmes.<sup>289</sup>In 1930, the painting had its attribution changed, with interesting consequences that are explained later in this chapter.

*Colin Agnew (1882-1975)*

Colin Agnew descended from the famous British family of art dealers that founded the Thomas Agnew and Sons firm in 1817 in Manchester. The firm specialized in European Old Master paintings, and Colin Agnew became an internationally known expert in Italian Old Masters. Upon Bode's suggestion, in 1907 he opened a branch of Agnew and Sons in Berlin, which during those years was experiencing an intellectual renaissance as a vibrant center for art historians and art dealers.<sup>290</sup>As he did with Contini Bonacossi, Bode had a major influence on Colin Agnew's life and business, to the point that "Bode's conception of museum *gesamkunstwerk* was

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*of the Magi*", now at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, no. MBMA 61.193. It was impossible at this stage to identify the works in the Kleinberger stock cards as purchased by the Italian dealer.

<sup>288</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 165.

<sup>289</sup><http://educators.mfa.org/european/portrait-man-writing-desk-19572> [access 21 July 2016].

<sup>290</sup>The National Gallery in London acquired the Thomas Agnew and Sons archive in 2014 following the closure of the gallery. The records are only partially available. For this reason, the analysis of the transactions between the two dealers could be subject to further research in the following years, when the records will be fully available. Thanks to Barbara Pezzini, an expert on the Agnew's Firm, for sharing her knowledge on the archive with me. The firm Agnews is still active and recently re-opened featuring a new company structure no longer based on a family-run business, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/research-centre/agnews-stock-books> [access 1 August 2016].

repeated in Colin's London flat".<sup>291</sup> Having Bode as a common acquaintance (as well as close friendship with Bode's pupil Wilhelm Valentine) certainly facilitated negotiations between the two dealers and US institutions, and the very early years of Contini Bonacossi's trading career reinforced their alliance against the Berenson-Duveen trust.

28 Gennaio 1927 Detroit

Colin Agnew il nostro quadro... Madonna col Bambino e San Giovannino di Antonello da Messina [fig.40]. Credo che Berenson, che è lui che contraddice il nome di Antonello da Messina, morirà dalla rabbia, e così Duveen (che non abbiamo voluto conoscere). Qui tanto l'uno che l'altro son trattati da grandi egoisti e maldicenti, non vogliono lasciar vivere nessuno. Nessuno toglie a loro l'intelligenza l'uno per gli affari, l'altro per conoscitore, ma bisogna essere umani. Noi siamo quelli che in arte teniamo alta la bandiera, le persone che comperano da noi si affidano completamente al nostro parere e buon gusto, non hanno bisogno né dell'uno, né dell'altro.<sup>292</sup>

From this first documentable sale to Agnew in 1922 and throughout the 1920s, Contini Bonacossi and Agnew were constantly trading, in London as well as in New York, where Agnew opened a branch in 1925 on 57<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>293</sup> Between June and October of 1924, Contini Bonacossi sold at least four paintings to Agnew, including *Portrait of the Doge Morosini* by Tintoretto, which was then resold by Agnew to the National Gallery in London; a portrait of a head by Van Dyck; one Tiepolo, *The Rape of Europa*; and *Crucifixion* by Cima da Conegliano, now at the University of

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<sup>291</sup>Kingzett, 1976, 159.

<sup>292</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 118. The painting in question is now attributed to Michele da Verona and was sold by Contini Bonacossi to Agnew in 1922 and then by Agnew in 1927 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, n. 27.41. Since 1919, Duveen and Berenson were involved in the Duveen-Hahn trial regarding a version of *La Belle Ferronnière* by Leonardo da Vinci. By many described as the trial of the century in the art field, it certainly damaged Duveen and Berenson's reputation, but it did not stop their business which continued to thrive. Their partnership broke off for good in 1937. See Brewer, 2009.

<sup>293</sup>For example, in 1922, Contini Bonacossi sold to Agnew the portrait by Tintoretto, *Portrait of Vincenzo Morosini* (National Gallery, London n.4004). The painting was then sold to the National Gallery in London by Agnew in 1924. <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jacopo-tintoretto-portrait-of-vincenzo-morosini> [access 6 July 2016]. The painting by Bernardo Cavallino *Christ driving the Traders from the Temple* (National Gallery, London n. 4778) was instead donated to the museum by Contini Bonacossi himself in 1935. The provenance of the painting has not been cleared, although it is possible the painting was acquired directly from Sestieri. The painting was indeed exhibited at the 1922 exhibition in Palazzo Pitti Florence as owned by Sestieri. Contini Bonacossi lent many paintings from his personal collection to the same show. <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/bernardo-cavallino-christ-driving-the-traders-from-the-temple> [access 6 July 2016]. Spinosa, 2009, n.192, 191.

Birmingham's Barber Institute of Fine Arts (fig. 34). According to what the research can show at this date, it was in 1928 that the bulk of their transactions occurred. Sometimes Contini Bonacossi and Agnew bought works through a joint account (such as a portrait by Reynolds on 23 June 1928, relevant because it is the only example I was able to document of Contini Bonacossi buying in shares with another dealer), and sometimes they exchanged masterpieces, such as a painting attributed to Giovanni Bellini.

1 Marzo 1927 New York

Dopo siamo andati a rifocillarci, come si può d'Alfredo. Appena fatto colazione, ci siamo recati da Colin Agnew!! Per prendere in prova per noi, una splendida donna mezza figura di nudo cosa mai vista... di Giovanni Bellini... ma! Tacete, eh? Non dite nulla, io non posso tacere perché mi sento i brividi dalla felicità, speriamo combinare con cambio ed un poco di contanti [fig. 35]. Abbiamo anche visto uno stupendo ritratto di Ribera degno di Velazquez, che io desidero tanto avere, papà ha fatto un'offerta... attendiamo una risposta. Dio mio! Che emozioni sento davanti alle belle cose. Papà poi doveva ricevere il signore? ed io con Kusterer sono andata al Museo per studiare un poco. Poi siamo venuti a piedi all'Hotel per fare una passeggiata.<sup>294</sup>

The painting, probably bought by Agnew from Fairfax Murray, was sold to the Count very likely on this occasion, as it was imported to Italy on 27 April 1927.<sup>295</sup> In London between June and October 1928, Contini Bonacossi bought an allegorical scene by Tiepolo (on October 26) and a work from the Venetian school, Veronese's *Atalanta Receiving the Boar's Head from Meleager*, eventually sold on 26 May 1930 to Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes of Boston, who donated the work to the Museum of Fine Art.<sup>296</sup>

Although only partially traceable, Contini Bonacossi's negotiations with Colin Agnew are of seminal importance for three main reasons: they confirm England as a major source for Italian paintings; they inform us of Contini Bonacossi's sources;

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<sup>294</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 172.

<sup>295</sup>Von Hadeln, 1929, 114-119. The actual location of the canvas is unknown. The last location recorded was Stanley Moss & Co. Riverdale on Hudson, New York, NY.

<sup>296</sup><http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/atalanta-receiving-the-boars-head-from-meleager-33885>. [Access 22 July 2016]. For reference to Contini Bonacossi's purchase from Agnew, see Getty Provenance Index <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 22 July 2016].

and, most importantly, they reinforce the international dimension of his business. It was an organic ecosystem of exchange. Indeed, among the most interesting purchases occurred during the summer of 1928 (June 23-28): Contini Bonacossi acquired six portraits from the British School, variously attributed to Lawrence, Gainsborough, and John Hoppner. This was an unusual purchase for the Italian dealer, whose market did not usually contemplate this genre. This purchase makes sense; however, when viewed in relation with Contini Bonacossi's transactions with Knoedler, whose area of expertise was indeed British portraiture. In 1929 he bartered them for a 5000 USD credit towards the purchase of two paintings from the Spanish school, *Portrait of Caballero* by Murillo (fig. 23) and *Annunciation* by El Greco (fig. 24).

#### *P & D Colnaghi and Co.*

By 1911, Colnaghi and Knoedler were so close, with Colnaghi buying and Knoedler selling, that a formal partnership was considered. The success of this relationship was ensured by Colnaghi's ability to supply Knoedler's with Old Masters.<sup>297</sup>

Most of Contini Bonacossi's transactions with Colnaghi during the 1920s concerned paintings Colnaghi owned in shared accounts with Knoedler. Between 1927 (year of the first traceable sale) and 1935, the Count bought nine paintings (including Lorenzo Lotto's *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*, bought by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1927) (fig. 36).<sup>298</sup> Two paintings were bought through Baron Detlev von Hadeln, a renowned art historian, dealer, and collector who often traded with Contini Bonacossi or on his behalf, and one through Gualtiero Volterra (as already explained in the first chapter). The complex mechanisms of the art business (such as partnerships or consortiums) are shown in the transactions that led to the sale of *Portrait of Eleonora of Toledo* by Agnolo Bronzino to Contini Bonacossi (National

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<sup>297</sup>Hall, 1992, 18. For the history of the firm see Colnaghi website [access 24 June 2016].

<sup>298</sup>For a complete record of the provenance and purchase information from Colnaghi see the Getty Provenance Index <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 22 July 2016]. The painting, bought by Contini Bonacossi from Colnaghi in 1927, was soon resold to Mrs. Henrietta Goddard Wigglesworth Fitz March 1927.

Gallery of Art in Washington DC, 1961.9.7) (fig. 142).<sup>299</sup> Because of the Colnaghi-Knoedler partnership, information on the painting's ownership can be found in both dealers' archives. *Portrait*'s modern journey started in Scotland, where it was first property of the Duke of Hamilton. Thomas Arthur then owned the painting until 6 February 1907, when it was bought by Colnaghi in half share with Knoedler for a total of 450GBP.<sup>300</sup> The work was then sold to Victor Fischer, an American collector from Washington, DC, on 12 December 1910, only to be bought back in full share by Colnaghi in 1912. On 31 March 1913, the painting reappears in Knoedler's stock books, indicating that Colnaghi managed to resell a half share of the painting to Knoedler for 225GBP.<sup>301</sup> Recorded as unsold in the Knoedler archive, the painting appears in the Colnaghi records as fully owned starting in July 1924 and sold to Contini Bonacossi in 1926.<sup>302</sup>

The same year, Contini Bonacossi bought the painting *Peacocks* by the Dutch artist Melchior d'Hondecoeter from Colnaghi; it was sold to Kress in October 1927, then donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City later that year (fig. 37).<sup>303</sup>

15 Aprile 1929

Dopo la visita di Kress (già mentre) io e Federico siamo stati al Museo [Metropolitan], vi sono là sette quadri o più nostri, l'Antonello da Messina, l'Andrea del Sarto tondo, Van Der Kauter (il gran pavone con animali e

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<sup>299</sup>Getty Provenance Research Database <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46106.html>, K2068, 1961.9.7

<sup>300</sup>Getty Provenance Research Database <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 28 June 2016], Knoedler book n. 5, stock n. 11319.

<sup>301</sup><http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/stockbooks/servlet.starweb>, [access 28 June 2016], Knoedler book n. 6, stock n. 13225.

<sup>302</sup>The comprehensive provenance record of the painting can be found in the Getty Provenance Research Database <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 28 June 2016].

<sup>303</sup>Hall, 1992, 131, lists it among paintings sold by Colnaghi. McCarrrel Lansing, 1928, 91–92, describes the work as one of three paintings given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Kress. During the same year, Contini Bonacossi bought also a diptych by Isenbrandt (K6A-6B, Lowe Art Museum Coral Gables, 61.006.000, <http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&collectionID=27834>, [access 29 June 2016]) through Knoedler that owned the painting in half share with Colnaghi.

frutta), e vari primitivi, il primo fu comperato dal museo, gli altri dono di Kress.<sup>304</sup>

In 1928, Contini Bonacossi bought the Rembrandt tondo *Portrait of a Young Woman* (now attributed to the workshop) from Colnaghi, selling it immediately to Kress on 2 October 1928.<sup>305</sup>

### *Knoedler Gallery*

According to a survey I conducted in the Knoedler Archives at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, between 1927 and 1942, Contini Bonacossi bought nine paintings from the Knoedler Galley and traded eleven.<sup>306</sup> The Knoedler Gallery opened in New York in 1857, when Michael Knoedler bought what was at the time the American branch of Paris' Goupil Gallery, for which he had served as manager. In one-hundred-and-sixty years of activity, the Knoedler Gallery played a significant role in shaping American private collections and in the development of American museums. It was the most significant conduit for European Old Masters paintings to the US as well as British art, thanks to a partnership with the British dealer Colnaghi.<sup>307</sup> In 1930-31 Knoedler facilitated with Colnaghi and Matthiesen (Berlin) one of the most iconic and controversial art deals of the last century: the sale of twenty-one masterpieces from the Hermitage Museums in Saint Petersburg to Andrew Mellon, who at the time was Secretary of the United States Treasury for the Roosevelt Administration.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>304</sup>Melchior d'Hondecoeter, "Peacocks" (27.250.1) : <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436671> [access 28/6/2016], Antonello da Messina, see p. ; At this time, the painting by Guidoccio Palmerucci, *Madonna and Child* ( 1962.158, M-5) at the Harvard Art Museum was donated to the Metropolitan Museum by Kress.

<sup>305</sup>Getty Provenance Research Database <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 28 June 2016] and Workshop of Rembrandt, *Portrait of a young woman*, Allentown Art Museum, n.1961.35. <http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&artistID=35701> [access 28 June 2016].

<sup>306</sup>Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971] Getty Research Institute, [http://www.getty.edu/research/special\\_collections/notable/knoedler.html](http://www.getty.edu/research/special_collections/notable/knoedler.html).

<sup>307</sup>Penot, 2017.

<sup>308</sup>Walker, 1964.

According to the records in the Getty Research Institute's Knoedler Archives, between January and April 1927 Contini Bonacossi bought three paintings during one of his major trips to the US; of these three, he sold one. On 14 January 1927, he bought *Madonna Holding the Infant Savior* by Botticelli for 550 pounds (GBP),<sup>309</sup> a diptych attributed to the School of Bruges of a *Madonna and Child with Donor* for 1000 pounds (GBP);<sup>310</sup> and a portrait by Goya, *Marchesa de Bajamar*, for 11,000 pounds (GBP).<sup>311</sup> These purchases are also reported in the diaries by Contini Bonacossi's wife Vittoria.

5 Marzo 1927 New York

Siamo stati dopo dai Knoedler a vedere due Goya, una bella testa da Torero e una dama, forse li avremo in cambio (è lui che ci ha dato il Botticelli!).<sup>312</sup>

The purchase of a second Goya, *Testa da Torero* (fig.22) is mentioned by Vittoria, but there is no evidence for this in the Knoedler Archives. A portrait of a bullfighter by Goya appears in the Knoedler's stock book starting on 19 March 1913 in joint account with Colnaghi; it was then sold in October 1919 to Mrs. A. Stern of New York for 9500 GBP (fig. 22).<sup>313</sup> The painting was still in the Stern collection in 1924 (as quoted by Mayer in his monographic work about Goya), but Mayer co-lists the Knoedler Gallery as an owner. According to a document held in the Getty Research Institute's Collectors' Files, the painting was put on commission by Ms. Stern at the Knoedler Gallery (CA 5991), which then sold the painting to Contini Bonacossi on 4 February 1927. The price is not listed, but a note identifies the painting as *Portrait of*

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<sup>309</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. Records, approximately 1848-1971.GRI, Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler Book 7, Stock No. 16183, Page 93, Row 25 [access 6/21/2016].

<sup>310</sup>The diptych (sold by Knoedler in joint account with Colnaghi) is now attributed to Adriaen Isenbrandt *The Madonna and Child with a Member of the Hillensberger Family*, now at the Lowe Art Museum in Coral Gables, donated to Kress in 1961, (K6A-6B, 61.006.000. <http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&collectionID=27834> [access 6/24/2016].

<sup>311</sup>The painting was imported to Italy (11 May 1927, export license n. 133) shortly after their return to Italy. Knoedler bought it directly from the Marques de Bajamar in London on 15 July 1912 and then sold by the New York headquarter to Contini Bonacossi. Longhi-Mayer, 1930, 23, pl. XXV.

<sup>312</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 178.

<sup>313</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971]. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler Book 6, Stock No. 13196, Page 63, Row 16.

*Pedro Romero*, now at the Uffizi Gallery.<sup>314</sup> What is sure is that Contini Bonacossi's hope of an exchange vanished, and he ended up paying for both Goyas.

7 Aprile 1927

Ore 19.10 Entro in questo momento. Stamane dopo colazione siamo stati dal signor Knoedler, perché papà ama un Goya che ha questo negoziante, io tiro indietro... ma lo vuole. Domani vedrà se può fare un cambio, ma non ci spero, quelli vogliono i denari.<sup>315</sup>

5 Marzo 1927

Con papà siamo poi andati all'American Art a vedere i quadri comperati la notte precedente. Papà era furioso perché credeva di averli pagati troppo (erano quadri che io sola avevo visto e consigliato), ma alla vista del bel giovanetto fiorentino in abito di seta con pelliccia, si calmò, vennero poi alla luce del giorno i due Magnasco che sono due meraviglie ma... non mi disse brava. parlando di quadri [with Knoedler] si disse d'aver comprato due Magnaschi, lui rispose subito ne ho due anch'io (me li faccia vedere) va a cercarli... erano quelli che noi avevamo comperato e gli erano costati più cari a lui.<sup>316</sup>

The two paintings by Alessandro Magnasco, a *Monk Blessing a Wreck* and a *Monk in Meditation*, were indeed sold by Knoedler to the American Art Association in July 1924, a few years before Contini Bonacossi's purchase. Bought by Knoedler from the collection of Max Rothschild from London for 225 GBP, the paintings were then sold to the auction house for 738.00 USD and bought by Contini Bonacossi in March 1927.<sup>317</sup> The next year, Contini Bonacossi both bought and traded works with Knoedler's. On 10 August 1928, he sold three paintings of saints by Segna di Bonaventura for 7000 GBP.<sup>318</sup> A few months earlier, on 30 June 1928, he bought a portrait by Francesco Salviati, *Don Garcia de Medici*, for 550 GBP.

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<sup>314</sup>Uffizi Gallery, Inv. CB 22; Longhi-Mayer, 1930, 24; Salmi, 1967., 222-223.

<sup>315</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 240.

<sup>316</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 178.

<sup>317</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971]. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Book 7, Stock No. 15967, Page 76, Row 47.

<sup>318</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971]. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Book 7, stock No. 16908, p. 147, row 44.



5 Giugno 1929

Ore 12.15 Papà è di là con il sig. Messmore della ditta Knoedler, fa vedere i quadri inglesi per fare un cambio con un Greco e un Murillo. Per noi quell'arte non interessa molto, e preferiamo, se è possibile, il Greco e il Murillo.<sup>319</sup>

Bartolome Esteban Murillo's *Caballero (Portrait of a Gentleman, presumably a Member of the Ostigliani Family)* in joint account with Rene Gimpel since 4 November 1921, was sold to Contini Bonacossi on 18 December 1929 in New York for 3500 GBP. (fig.23).<sup>320</sup> It remained property of the Count until his death in 1955; it was then sold by the private dealer Stanley Moss in New York. It reappeared briefly on the market at the Salander O'Reilly Gallery in 2006. It was then sold at Sotheby's New York for 182,500 USD on 9 June 2011, lot n. 52.<sup>321</sup> *The Annunciation* by El Greco was bought probably on the same day as Murillo's *Caballero*. Knoedler bought *The Annunciation* (fig. 24) on 18 March 1928 through a joint account with Galerie Trotti & Cie (Paris) for 7500 GBP from the London dealer Arthur J. Sulley, and then resold the painting to Contini Bonacossi for 9500 GBP.<sup>322</sup> It remained the property of Contini Bonacossi until his death. It was sold by his heirs in the 1970s to the Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza.

Contini Bonacossi had a credit of 5000 USD on all this purchases from Knoedler because he exchanged the following nine paintings (eight of the British School and one French) with the gallery on 23 July 1929: *Portrait of a Gentleman* and *Portrait of Ms. Fisher* by Thomas Gainsborough; three portraits attributed to Thomas Lawrence, *Portrait of Lady Pendergast*, *Portrait of Mrs. Morton Pitte*, and *Portrait of John Griffith* (later sold by Knoedler on 2 April 1940 to John W. Sherwood for 3000 USD); one painting by John Westbrooke Chandler, *Portrait of His Excellence*

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<sup>319</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 322.

<sup>320</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. Records, [approximately 1848-1971]. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler book 8, stock n. 15358, p. 6, row 51.

<sup>321</sup>Sotheby's New York, Old Masters Sale, 9 June 2011, lot. n. 52.

<sup>322</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. records, approximately 1848-1971. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler Book n. 8. Stock n. A221.

*Dewey Stephen Fox as a Boy*; two portraits attributed to the British School, *Portrait of Miss Palmer* and *Portrait of Mrs. Abington*, donated by Knoedler to the Art and Antique Dealers League.<sup>323</sup> Although not mentioned by Vittoria Bonacossi in her diaries, two more paintings are recorded in the Knoedler Archives as having been sold in December 1929. One is a work by Francois Boucher, *Venus et ses Amours*, which was for sold for 4200 USD through a joint account with Wildenstein and Co.<sup>324</sup> The other one is an Old Masters work, *Portrait of a Lady* by Titian, which sold for 5000 USD.<sup>325</sup>

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This section has informed us, through documentary evidence of his purchases presented here for the first time, of Contini Bonacossi's transactions and business ties with some of the most important art dealers of the period that dominated the art market in Europe as well as in the United States. This recollection allows understanding how and under which circumstances the objects that he traded came into his possession, as well as the nature of his merchandise. While the potential of social science models of network theory should be acknowledged here, the research must rest on careful analysis of the evidence following the established principles of provenance research within art-historical studies to provide a documented repertoire of Contini Bonacossi's business network at this stage of scholarly investigation in this field.<sup>326</sup> This web of suppliers confirms the international dimension of his dealings and reiterates the prominent role of art dealers in the cross-continental movement of cultural goods that occurred in the first years of the last century

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<sup>323</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. records, approximately 1848-1971. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings, Knoedler Book 8, stock n. A828-A837.

<sup>324</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. records, approximately 1848-1971. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings Knoedler book 8, stock n. 16113, p. 9, row 33

<sup>325</sup>M. Knoedler & Co. records, approximately 1848-1971. Series I. Stock books. Series I.A. Paintings Knoedler book 8, stock n. 16875, p. 18, row 35.

<sup>326</sup>In this context, the application of 'network analysis' as theorized among others by Montias (1989), McLean (2017); Padgett and Powell (2012) would be most useful when enough quantitative data regarding Contini Bonacossi's commercial network in relation to that of other contemporary antiquarian dealers becomes available.

between Europe and the United States. This movement of art as cultural capital was enabled by many of Contini Bonacossi's American clients, as described in the following section.

### *Clients*

The first three decades of the 20th century, the peak of Contini Bonacossi's commercial activities, were a crucial time for many American museums of European art. Some museums, drawing from private collections, were founded during that time, while others expanded and diversified their holdings through private donations. My research shows that most, if not all, of Contini Bonacossi's known clients that I was able to document, were US citizens living in America and belonged to a very small circle of wealthy people, who often acted as influential patrons for American art museums and other cultural institutions and became spokesmen for their communities, as Neil Harris has argued.<sup>327</sup> Contini Bonacossi was thus a catalyst for the development of major American museums. Most clients were Protestants, but a considerable minority was part of the German Jewish elite of New York and Boston. As reported by George Goodwin in his study on the Jewish elite in the art world, in the 1920s, a time of great American prosperity, the Jewish-American establishment reached its zenith. Among this establishment, Paul J. Sachs (1878-1965), Felix Warburg (1871-1937), and Simon Guggenheim (1867-1942) belonged to Contini Bonacossi's network.<sup>328</sup> And, according to Peter Williams, some of the Jewish Guggenheims also appeared on Episcopalian family trees. Regardless of cultural background, these clients belonged to a category especially important in US culture: cultural, specifically, art philanthropists.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup>Harris, 1990, 267. The literature on American collectors of Old masters is vast. Here some of the most recent publications. Bowron, 2017; Jackall, et al, 2017; Reist, 2015; Quodbach, 2014; Reist, 2014.

<sup>328</sup>Goodwin, 1998, 119-52.

<sup>329</sup>Williams, 2006, 170-223.

As already mentioned, in the first decades of the 20th century, the commercial art trade between Europe and the United States grew incrementally, “following the pattern established by 1914”.<sup>330</sup> While the Great Depression may have slowed the growth of cultural institutions, during the 1930s and the 1940s the United States experienced an explosion of civic art museums, going from 30 in 1900 to 410 in the 1950s.<sup>331</sup> Institutions in cities like Chicago, Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, and Buffalo were born of the distinctly American condition of art patronage and education, and these inland cities were competing with large East Coast cities to be leading intellectual and cultural centers. Contini Bonacossi’s business with the United States lasted for almost three decades, interrupted only by World War II. The following examination intentionally excludes Contini Bonacossi’s most important client, Samuel Henry Kress, as the last chapter will be devoted to their long and fertile business relationship, which lasted for over twenty-eight years.

To date, there are no comprehensive studies on the impact of the Italian Old Masters dealers in the development of Italian Old Masters collections in America, which this dissertation seeks to remedy. An analysis of Italian dealers’ interactions with American collectors, scholars, and artists (either travelling or residing in Italy), as well as with American artistic institutions in the early 20th century, has yet to be written. The meagerness of studies on Italian art dealers active during this time, combined with the scarcity of available resources in Italy for studying the market for Old Masters, certainly presents a challenge for scholars. Yet evidence of these interactions can be found in the biographies of many leading art professionals and scholars of the time. The case of Contini Bonacossi provides evidence for the fertile connections between Italian dealers and American scholars, collectors, and artists. This research has brought to light exchanges between Contini Bonacossi and American scholars and collectors visiting Rome in the early 20th century. His dealings are proof of the increasing engagement of Italian dealers during those years, with prominent American art patrons, professionals, and academics playing an important role in the development of art and in the so called *kunstwissenschaft* in the

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<sup>330</sup>Lamberti, 1980, 7.

<sup>331</sup>Hall, 1992, 2.

United States. For example, during his undergraduate work at Harvard (1891-95) Edward Forbes (1873-1969), later museum director of the Fogg Art Museum, travelled to Italy, as did most of his fellow students. In Rome, he met Charles Eliot Norton's son Richard. A professor at both Harvard and the American Academy in Rome, Richard Norton also worked as a European art expert for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He urged Forbes to assemble a collection of artworks for long-term deposit at the Fogg, planting in Forbes's mind the seed for the renovation project that transformed the Fogg into the most innovative academic museum of its time in the United States.<sup>332</sup> Forbes focused on Italian Renaissance painting. Driven by his belief in the pedagogical value of original artworks, he devoted his career to using these pieces to replace the plaster casts in his academic museum collections. Forbes's multiple trips to dealers across Italy in search of artifacts are documented in his papers, including his correspondence with Contini Bonacossi, to whom he described his mission of "bringing (a) few real(ly) good pictures into the collections of America."<sup>333</sup>

Brought to light through original archival research, the network of American clients detailed in the following paragraphs, is for the vast majority composed of private collectors, museum professionals or academics engaged, in different ways and roles in the dynamics of cultural philanthropy. It is then the philanthropic penchant of their purchases, "their private act of purchase invested with public significance" made through Contini Bonacossi that ultimately will define his role in the formation of American art institutions.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup>Sorensen, Lee, "Richard Norton" Dictionary of Art Historians, <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/nortonr.htm> [access 15 July 2016]. Brush, 2004.

<sup>333</sup>My gratitude goes to Elizabeth Walmsley, painting conservator at the National Gallery of Washington DC, who shared copies of these documents with me during our conversations related to her research work on the Pietro Lorenzetti Triptych bought by Felix Warburg from Contini Bonacossi and then donated to the National Gallery by his wife Frieda. Letter from Edward Forbes to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi on 22 May 1928. Harvard University Art Museums Archives (HUAMA), Edward W. Forbes Papers [1867-2005], box 122 folder 2430.

<sup>334</sup>Harris, 1990, 267.

Contini Bonacossi made his first contacts with Harvard University through Denman Ross and Durr Friedley. At the time, the Fogg Museum was led by its first director, Charles H. Moore, who held the position from 1895 to 1908. Denman Waldo Ross was born into a prosperous Cincinnati family. An art collector and a painter, he was (starting in 1909) a professor of art at Harvard University and a trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He was also a member of the highly influential circle of intellectuals trained by Harvard's first art historian, Charles Eliot Norton, and one of Bernard Berenson's best friends.<sup>335</sup> Contini Bonacossi's first documentable contact with Ross is dated 2 July 1920; it happened through Hendrick Christian Andersen, a Norwegian-American sculptor who served as Contini Bonacossi's point of contact during his frequent absences from Rome. The artist at the time was living on Rome's Piazza del Popolo, as is shown on his business card attached to the letter.

2 July 1920

Dear Denman Ross: Thank you for your kind letter of June 24<sup>th</sup>. I saw Contini for half an hour the other day and spoke to him about the prices of the Fragonards. He seemed to be rather unwilling to sell them separately as he considers they are pendants. The larger Fragonard (Maddalena) liras 9,000; 2 *Wrestlers and Diana Huntress* for liras 9,000; *Santini* by Bramantino liras 4,000; Ingres *Portrait of a Man* liras 7,500; Ingres *Portrait of a Lady* liras 2,000, free of any charges from London. Mr. Contini is leaving (sic) Rome the middle of this month and he will be absent for three months. He is ready on request to give you prices of other pictures in which you might be interested. He will probably be in Paris and London next month. If the prices are suitable he could meet you (with) the photographs and do business directly. His collection during his absence is closed, but he will let the above mentioned pictures be seen by your friend when he comes to Rome. Any communication for Mr. Contini can be addressed to me in Rome.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>335</sup>Frank, 2011.

<sup>336</sup>Letter from Christian Andersen to Denman Ross on 2 July 1920, HUAMA, Forbes Papers, box 122, folder 2430. Hendrick Christian Andersen was born in 1873, the son of a poor Norwegian couple who the following year immigrated to Newport, Rhode Island. He and his two brothers all showed precocious artistic ability and were taken up and educated at the expense of prosperous local philanthropists. Hendricks's older brother Andreas became a painter, Hendrick a sculptor and the youngest, Arthur, a musician. Andreas married Olivia Cushing, a wealthy Newport heiress with literary pretensions, a match that was to have even more far-reaching effects on Hendricks's career than on her husband's settling in Rome toward the end of the 1890s. Andersen remained connected at the highest level with the affluent Americans from Boston, Newport and New England thanks to his sister-in-law, who moved to Rome and lived with Andersen after her husband's death. Andersen is

Among the works mentioned in the letter, and for which Ross's interest developed into a purchase, only two are identifiable, now attributed to Livius Mehus: *Huntress Resting* (fig. 38) and *Wrestlers in a Landscape* (fig.39). Ross bought the paintings as works by Fragonard for 9,000 liras (as indicated in the letter); he donated them together to the Museum of Fine Art in Boston as works by Francesco Mola on 21 April 1921.<sup>337</sup> As we learn from the correspondence between Contini Bonacossi and Ross, it was Ross's pupil Durr Friedley, in Rome for a summer abroad, who in 1911 facilitated Contini Bonacossi's first known sale of artwork to an American client. Back in New York after his Roman holiday, Friedley became a staff member at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Decorative Arts Department under the guidance of Wilhelm Valentiner (1880-1958), Bode's pupil.<sup>338</sup> Promoted to head of the department from 1914 to 1917, he resigned after the war. In 1921 Friedley moved to Rome, settling in Palazzo Altieri on Piazza del Gesù with the intent of becoming a full-time portrait painter.<sup>339</sup> He facilitated for Contini Bonacossi the sale to New York collector Grace Rodgers of a sculpture group, *Endymion Sleeping*, then attributed to Bernini, and the sale of some sculptures to Harvard's Arthur Pope (1881-1969) for the Malden Library in Massachusetts.<sup>340</sup> Contini Bonacossi then reached out again to Ross, attaching a list of his paintings and sculptures, divided by schools: French, Spanish, Flemish and Dutch, and Venetian. Unfortunately, the list only mentions the

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also remembered because of his relationship with Henry James, whose epistolario was published by Mamoli Zorzi, 2000. His home/atelier in Rome was converted into a museum in 2000. <http://www.polomusealelazio.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/248/museo-hendrik-christian-andersen>. [Accessed 17 April 2017].

<sup>337</sup>The provenance details can be found in the Getty Provenance Index Database <http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb> [access 7 July 2016]. The museum website does not report any provenance information prior to Ross. 21.751:<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/huntresses-resting-31891>; 21.752:<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/wrestlers-in-a-landscape-31892>. [Access 7 July 2016].

<sup>338</sup>On Valentiner see Mascolo, 2014.

<sup>339</sup>For biographical information: Durr Friedley Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives. [http://www.libmma.org/digital\\_files/archives/Durr\\_Friedley\\_records\\_b1717476.pdf](http://www.libmma.org/digital_files/archives/Durr_Friedley_records_b1717476.pdf). [Access 20 July 2016].

<sup>340</sup>Mrs Rogers was one of the first known Contini Bonacossi's American clients. On this sale see: V. Contini Bonacossi 2007, 183 and Zaninelli, 2011. I contacted the Archives of the Malden Library requesting information about their collection of sculptures put together with the consultation of Arthur Pope but I have not received any information on the matter.

artists' names; it does not provide any details about titles, dimensions, or provenance, making identification of the whole body of works challenging. However, the list is still of great interest to us because it represents the earliest recollection of Contini Bonacossi's holdings. His diverse portfolio, with its great range of artworks, helps explain his appeal to overseas collectors and museum professionals in search of acquisitions for their own institutions or patrons.

26 July 1921

My Dear Mr. Denman W. Ross,

I hope you have safely returned to your home after your great travel. I intended to write you several times but I was unable to have your address in Europe. I hope you will be soon be back to Italy and in this case I shall be delighted in showing you the new pictures which I added to my collection. I had the chance in the last six months, to buy two very important private collections; one of them was closed from about 100 years and contained a lot of the most important works by the great masters quite unknown. Pisanello, Mantegna, Melozzo, Antonello are represented by works of great importance as well as Cima, Tintoretto, Titian, Bellini, Greco, Goya, etc. In order to give you an idea of the present state of my collection, I add a list of the same containing the most important works. Please do not forget, if some of your friends come to Rome, to address them to via Nomentana. I shall be very pleased to show them my collection. I hope the two Fragonard and the Ingres have been duly appreciated by American connoisseurs. The Bramantino *Santini*, the *Crucifixion* by Bellini, the Ingres and all the works that interest you are still in my possession. Another of my good things went lately to America. You will surely remember my group of Bernini; *Endymion Sleeping*. It was sold through my friend Freedley to Mrs. Rogers of New York. I sold also some works to Mr. Pope for the Malden Library.<sup>341</sup>

Grace Rainey Rogers (1867-1943) was an Ohio native who spent most of her life in New York City.<sup>342</sup> She was a prominent collector, mainly of French and Persian art. Culturally very active, she served on the boards of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Cleveland Museum of Art. It is likely that the sculpture she bought from Contini Bonacossi as a work by Bernini is

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<sup>341</sup><http://maldenpubliclibrary.org/converse-art-archives/art-galleries/about-the-collection>.

<sup>342</sup>*The Cambridge Dictionary of American Biography*, by John S. Bowman. S.v. "Rogers, Grace Rainey" Retrieved August 12 2016 from <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Rogers%2c+Grace+Rainey>.



the same sculpture that she donated in 1942 to the Cleveland Museum of Art.<sup>343</sup> Since then, the attribution has changed, and it is now identified as a work by Agostino Cornacchini (1942.51).<sup>344</sup> The other buyer, Arthur Pope, was mentored by Denman Ross. Pope (1881-1969) was director of the Fogg Museum in 1946-48 (also serving as acting director in 1918-19) and professor at Harvard University from 1906 to 1949. He supported a fine arts curriculum that merged theory with practice, emphasizing the importance of first-hand experience with different techniques and materials to complement the study of theory. Like Ross, Pope was himself an artist, a watercolorist. He exhibited at many commercial galleries, such as the Ehrich Galleries in Manhattan in 1922.<sup>345</sup> Although considered an authority of Iranian art, he also acted as a middle man between museum and dealers trading European art. Among his clients were W. R. Hearst, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, and the Malden Library Art Gallery in Massachusetts, for which he served as art consultant for over thirty years. Pope formed an outstanding art collection of American and European art for the Malden Library, including a few sculptures bought from Contini

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<sup>343</sup>A few years later, Vittoria Contini Bonacossi mentioned this sale in her diaries after a visit to Rogers's house in New York City, V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 183-84.

<sup>344</sup>[http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1942.51?collection\\_search\\_query=cornacchini&op=search&form\\_build\\_id=formFcqtElbMoIUc9KuUMvjAB8kJvJEo2JsJPxH9W4SusAA&form\\_id=clevelandart\\_collection\\_search\\_form](http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1942.51?collection_search_query=cornacchini&op=search&form_build_id=formFcqtElbMoIUc9KuUMvjAB8kJvJEo2JsJPxH9W4SusAA&form_id=clevelandart_collection_search_form) [accessed 12 August 2016]. On 28 August 2016 I contacted Dr. Cory Korkov, associate curator for European paintings at the Cleveland Museum of Art for more information regarding this piece. Dr. Korkov kindly replied as follows: 'I have looked in the file for the Cornacchini and find that we do not have any secure provenance information before Rogers. Back in the 1960s a curator wrote Roberto Longhi to ask if he knew, since he had supplied the photograph when the work appeared in Wittkower's *Miscellanea Bibliotheca Hertziana*. Longhi wrote back (in November of 1964) saying "I remember the "Endymion" published by Wittkower as by Cornacchini. That piece was in some private collection in Rome about 1920-25 but unfortunately I can't remember the name of the collector." Wittkower was also contacted and did not know'. Considering Longhi's indication of the piece in a private collection in Rome during the 1920s it is very possible this could be the same piece Contini Bonacossi is referring to in his letter. Also, Dr. Korkov added that many of Grace Rainey Rogers's purchases had been made from French & Co. in NY, a firm Contini Bonacossi was very familiar with. A photograph of the group when a Contini Bonacossi's property identical to the Cleveland piece was published in Tamassia, 1995, n.55670, 77. Tamassia indicates a terracotta version of the group, probably a bozzetto, as part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, n. 56.141. (<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/sleeping-endymion-551910> [access 23 October 2017]).

<sup>345</sup>Arthur Pope, 1880-1974. Papers, 1907-1979: A Guide. Harvard Art Museum Archives, 2008 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Bonacossi.<sup>346</sup> During this crucial time in the development of the modern art market, artists themselves played an important role. It was common practice for artists to engage in antique dealing. Their passion for Old Masters was often translated verbatim into their own artistic production, an aspect which enhanced their success. This was especially true for Spanish artists living in Rome, who enjoyed a great deal of success thanks to international dealers like Goupil in Europe and the United States. The hard work done by art dealers and artists in mediating art sales had already opened new avenues for the Roman art market by the early 1870s.<sup>347</sup>

*Felix Warburg (1871-1937) and the “Heavenly Twins”:* Paul Sachs (1878-1965) and Edward W. Forbes (1873-1969).

Contini Bonacossi's ties to Harvard extended to Percy Selden Straus (1876-1944), Felix Warburg (1871-1937), Edward W. Forbes (1873-1969), Paul Sachs (1878-1965), and Edward Jackson Holmes.<sup>348</sup> They were all Harvard graduates, art collectors, patrons, museum professionals, and academics. Contini Bonacossi's relationship with the Warburg-Sachs-Forbes triumvirate is one of the most interesting aspects of his legacy. Thanks to their combined correspondence (held in the Harvard Art Museum archives) and Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's diaries, we learn about how they became acquainted and about how their transactions developed. The archival material documenting Contini Bonacossi's involvement with the so-called

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<sup>346</sup>The Malden Library was funded in 1885 by the first mayor of the city of Malden and industrialist founder of the Rubber Shoe Company, Elisha S. Converse [1820-1904]. <http://maldenpubliclibrary.org/converse-art-archives/> [access 11 July 2016].

<sup>347</sup>Querci, 2014; Jandolo, 1953. Some of these artists' studios are still legendary because of the criteria these artists were employing in displaying their objects and the purpose of it. The studio, like the galleria, is a status symbol, it has to please and lure in the clientele. Countless are the examples of artist/dealers in Rome: Achille Simonetti, Augusto Jandolo, and Jose Gallegos di Xeres. A happy example is offered by the painter Achille Vertunni.

<sup>348</sup>“Percy Selden Straus”, 1944, 172-173. It is unclear how Contini Bonacossi's relationship with the New York businessman and son of founder of the Macy's Department Store started. It is possible this happened through the connections he had at Harvard, like for example through Felix Warburg with whom he co-founded the Fine Art Institute at the New York University; or through Berenson's suggestions to Straus, for whom the art historian acted as an advisor for his collection through the years. Straus trusted Contini Bonacossi's reputation enough to buy works of art from him. In 1925 Contini Bonacossi sold a painting as Lorenzo Lotto for seventy thousand lire to the businessman Percy Straus. The hand written expertise by Longhi in which the scholar stated the attribution as an authentic work by Lorenzo Lotto on 15 May 1925. Now the painting is in Houston, a gift to the Museum of Fine Arts by Straus himself. (fig. 47).

“heavenly twins, “unknown before now, covers the years 1926-29. The 1920s were crucial for Contini Bonacossi’s business for in those years, he rose into the highest ranks of American culture. They were also an important decade for the Fogg Art Museum (now known as Harvard Art Museum), where Forbes and Sachs were transforming Harvard’s approach to pedagogy with the intent of “formulating scholarly and museological standards to stimulate the appreciation of art in the United States.”<sup>349</sup> Their effort was supported by cultural and financial leaders like Felix Warburg. The correspondence can be divided into two categories: before and after June 1927 (when the new Fogg Art Museum opened). The first category contains correspondence between Warburg and Sachs concerning advice about a purchase made by Warburg from Contini Bonacossi of a *Madonna* by Botticelli (bought on 20 December 1926) and a triptych by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (figs. 40-41).<sup>350</sup>

Felix Warburg, a Sephardic Jew born and raised in Hamburg, Germany, belonged to the Mittelwegbranch of the Warburg family, one of the world’s most distinguished families and the oldest continuously active banking families in the world.<sup>351</sup> Revered as Jewish royalty, Felix Warburg entered the highest ranks of German-Jewish bankers in Manhattan through his marriage in 1895 to Frieda Schiff (1876-1958), daughter of the Ashkenazi tycoon Jacob Henry Schiff (1847-1920), a German immigrant whose wealth and power on Wall Street was second only to John P. Morgan (1837-1913). As reported by the Warburg biographer Ron Chernov, Felix was mainly interested in philanthropy, education, and culture, not Wall Street. Nonetheless, he pursued a career in finance, succeeding his father as the head of the family firm together with his partner Otto Kahn. Throughout his life, Warburg supported cultural institutions and engaged in philanthropy. Unlike Warburg, his close friend Paul Sachs left the finance world, accepting Edward Forbes’ invitation to join him as associate director of the Fogg Art Museum. Sachs also persuaded Warburg to act as chairman of the Fogg’s Visiting Committee, which managed

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<sup>349</sup>Brush, 2004, 127.

<sup>350</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 68.

<sup>351</sup>Chernov, 1993.

fundraising activities for the museum. A partner in Goldman Sachs, his family's Wall Street firm, Paul Sachs was an avid art collector, especially of prints and drawings. As Brush wrote, "when Sachs joined the Fogg, he introduced Forbes to Wall Street."<sup>352</sup> Between 1905 and 1911, many of Manhattan's German-Jewish bankers began to build private collections of Old Masters paintings. Sachs had close ties with Warburg, who was known for financing the efforts of others in music and the arts (for example in 1922, when a fundraiser for the new Fogg was held at Warburg's house). Sachs and Warburg belonged to the same circle of cultivated German-Jewish bankers and had many friends in common.

Contini Bonacossi met Warburg and Sachs probably through the recommendation of Ross or Bode (who himself visited Harvard in 1915), likely in Rome.<sup>353</sup> During 1914-15, Sachs and Forbes joined forces to renovate the Fogg Art Museum, a mission they accomplished in 1927. Edward Forbes was the grandson of poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. During his studies at Harvard, Forbes' interest in the fine arts was encouraged by Professor Charles Eliot Norton. In 1898, Forbes traveled to Europe and began an earnest study of art and art history, with a focus on Italian primitive paintings. During these travels, he also began to acquire early Italian paintings. He became a trustee of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1903 and of the Fogg Art Museum in 1904, assuming the directorship of the Fogg in 1909. Both men retired in 1944.

Warburg relied on Sachs' opinion for his art purchases as the following letters regarding the purchase of the Pietro Lorenzetti triptych and a Botticelli from Contini Bonacossi prove:

Letter 22 December 1926 Felix Warburg to Paul Sachs

Dear Paul, I am very anxious that you should help me decide if it is worthwhile to acquire what looks to me like a most wonderful triptych by

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<sup>352</sup>Bush, 2004, 26.

<sup>353</sup>Thanks to some correspondence between Aby Warburg, the renowned cultural historian and Felix' brother, and Paul Sachs, we know that Sachs was in Rome in 1925. His brother, Arthur Sachs, also visited Contini Bonacossi's at this Roman residence probably around that time. See V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 76, 86.180.

Lorenzetti, which Contini has brought over. I am sending you by registered mail the letters from experts which Contini has had and which may prepare you for the shock. Please bring them with you when you come down. I am very much tempted to acquire them, though the price is high as is to be expected, but we will talk over it when we stand in front of them Saturday morning.<sup>354</sup>

Letter 30 December Felix Warburg to Paul Sachs

Dear Paul, I was awfully sorry that I got tied up. Contini came again and was sorry you didn't get a chance to pass by there once more. He tried to get Hammond Smith but he is out of town until next week. For his own satisfaction he got Mr. Picchetto, who writes about the picture as per enclosed copy. I wondered if you have talked to Forbes about it and if he expects to be around this neighborhood anyhow during these days. Frieda is still very lukewarm and I think that she would feel just as comfortable if I would not buy it. I am frank to say that it gives me a thrill but I can't judge if it is as good as it ought to be for the price he asks. I simply send you this line to thank you for your friendliness in going to all the trouble you have and I hope that you know how much I appreciate, every time I get together with you, the privilege of consulting and insulting you. (Picchetto letter to CB).<sup>355</sup>

The *Madonna* was successfully sold on that occasion and, in 1941, ended up in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a gift of the Warburg family. After changing the attribution from Botticelli to Studio of Botticelli, the picture was put up for sale by the museum at a Christie's auction in New York, where it was sold on 29 January 2014 (fig. 40).<sup>356</sup> Hammond Smith and Steven Picchetto, mentioned in the letter, were two of the most well-known restorers of the time. Smith worked as an independent consultant, Picchetto for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (and subsequently for Samuel Henry Kress and his Foundation until his death in 1949).

The technical study of artworks was one of Forbes's passions. He founded the Center for Conservation and Technical Studies (now named the Straus Center for

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<sup>354</sup>Letter from Felix Warburg to Paul Sachs on 22 December 1926, HUAMA, Paul J. Sachs Paper 1903-2005, box 84, folder 1913.

<sup>355</sup>Letter from Felix Warburg to Paul Sachs on 30 December 1926, HUAMA, Paul J. Sachs Paper 1903-2005, box 84, folder 1913.

<sup>356</sup>Christie's New York, *The Renaissance Sale*, 29 January 2014, lot n. 102.

Conservation) at the Fogg in 1928; it was the first treatment, research, and training facility for the fine arts in the United States, and the only museum in the world to use x-rays in an academic context. With the help of Alan Burroughs, conservator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Forbes pioneered the use of x-rays to analyze paintings. X-rays can detect repainting and other techniques, furthering the study of attribution. Forbes' accomplishments at the Fogg were inextricably connected to those of Sachs. Under their direction, a span of almost thirty years, the museum built a distinguished teaching collection and trained curators and directors for many American museums.<sup>357</sup>

5 Gennaio 1927

Giorno di emozioni! Si sta per concludere un affare, ma e un mese che si va avanti, ora si ora no! Stamani c'e stato qui il signor Sachs con un altro professore Forbes. Per vedere il restauro, applicano i raggi x. Hanno trovato il quadro del Lorenzetti in uno stato perfetto.<sup>358</sup>

The day after, Contini Bonacossi closed the sale of both paintings.

6 January 1927 Felix Warburg to Paul Sachs

Dear Paul,

I have purchased the three Lorenzetti and the Botticelli. I should like you to have these four pictures in the Fogg Museum, but I do not know whether you want them now. I would just as leave you have them in your hands from now on, so if you will give shipping instructions to Miss Emanuel, telling her how and by whom you want them shipped, she will take care of it and have them insured. Contini came down in his price quite considerably after a long tussle, and I am very happy to own them. Thank you for all the trouble you have taken. I am glad you are equally enthusiastic about them as I am. When you have all the pictures in the gallery, I would appreciate if you have photographs taken for records' sake and have one copy sent to my brother Aby in Hamburg and one copy to Berenson.<sup>359</sup>

17 January 1927 Paul Sachs to Felix Warburg

Dear Felix,

I am going to try and write you once a week. After you left I have received your line of the 6<sup>th</sup> and shall have photographs taken of the pictures that you have so generously lent us, sending one copy to your brother in Hamburg and

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<sup>357</sup>Brush, 2004.

<sup>358</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 86.

<sup>359</sup>Letter from Felix Warburg to Paul Sachson 6 January 1927, HUAMA, Paul J. Sachs Paper 1903-2005, box 84, folder 1913.

one copy to Berenson. The pictures are now in the Museum and will be put on exhibition just as soon as Contini has sailed, since he has requested we should not show them publicly until after he had left the country. That sort of secrecy always annoys me and seems to me pointless. However, I shall follow his wishes. I wrote to Miss Emanuel about the condition of the Botticelli and she tells me in reply that she is sending you a copy of my letter, so that you will not comment on the matter any further. There is nothing to worry about, only I think the picture will bear careful watching and of course in view of your long absence I shall have to do what seems best to Edward and me in your interest just as if the picture were our own. In fact, under the circumstances, I think it is a lucky thing that it is in the Fogg Museum where it can be watched rather than in your closed Fifth Avenue home. I hope, dear Felix, you won't mind me saying that now you have shown a willingness to spend such princely sums in the acquisition of distinguished Italian paintings that it seems to me important you should watch closely the things that pass through Duveen's hands, because when all is said and done, when it comes to the world's masterpieces that occasionally break loose and that can only be acquired at a king's ransom, the fact remains, whether you like it or not, that the most important pictures after all pass through Duveen's hands and I am quite sure that you would not have to pay any more to him than to Contini or anyone else. In other words, if Contini had been the owner of the great triptych you have purchased, I am sure that it would not have cost you anymore that it cost you to purchase through Contini. What I am after is just this. Now that you are ready to buy some of the great pictures in the world, do give yourself the chance to see what passes through Duveen's hands. I hope you do not mind my talking out this way. But because of my deep affection for you and my interest in what you are doing I cannot talk otherwise than I would to my own brother.<sup>360</sup>

The remarks Sachs makes about Duveen and Contini Bonacossi are unsurprising. Considering Berenson's ties to Harvard and the great esteem for him among the American intelligentsia, lobbying for Duveen was a natural move for Fogg executives like Sachs. Despite these comments, Forbes continued to trade with Contini Bonacossi in the following years, as documented by their correspondence. The sale was ultimately a success and Warburg kept buying from Contini Bonacossi in the following years. For example, in 1937, Warburg bought Giovanni Bellini's *Saint Jerome* (41.654) (fig. 42), a painting donated by his wife Frieda to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1941.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>360</sup>Letter from Paul Sachs to Felix Warburg on 17 January 1927, HUAMA, Paul J. Sachs Paper 1903-2005, box 84, folder 1913.

<sup>361</sup><http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/saint-jerome-32802> [access 22 July 2016]. It could also be suggested that *the Adoration of the Child* by Defendente Ferrari was bought by Warburg from Contini

Vittoria Contini Bonacossi offered in her diaries an interesting point of view of the Fogg before the renovation. She also pointed out the display of the works that she and her husband sold to Warburg:

22 Marzo 1927, Boston

Al Museo Fogg: non molto bello, perché devono trasportarsi nel nuovo per il mese di giugno. Abbiamo prima visitato il vecchio e nominerò qualche pezzo più importante. Nell'ingresso due grifi romanici (che dovevamo comperare noi da Romano a Firenze), tre o quattro pezzi di nudi (ruderi) greci molto interessanti. Al 1° piano un capitello romanico ed una testa di Re idem. Si trovano esposti al pubblico il Botticelli nostro venduto al Sig. Warburg e così pure il trittico straordinario di Pietro Lorenzetti. Scusate se scrivo male, ma sono stanca ed ho una confusione nella testa di ciò che ho visto. È troppo per tenere a mente tutto, visto così in poche ore, non vi pare? Dunque riepilogo: una bella testina di Palma il Vecchio, un Carlo Crivelli (molto restaurato da Cavenaghi molto bene), 1 frate di Lorenzo Lotto, 1 Ribera, trittico di Taddeo Daddi, un'Annunciazione di Andrea Vanni, un Cosimo Tura, un bel Sassetta, un Morone buono, un Fra' Angelico, il ritratto di Dante e Virgilio di Giovanni da Ponte interessante per i soggetti. Altri quadri importanti. La figlia del Direttore Sachs ci ha portati a vedere il nuovo museo, questo è in stile italiano, il grande cortile colonne e portici tutto in travertino, hanno copiato un famoso chiostro che si trova a Montepulciano (Toscana). È molto bello e ben diviso, al muro tela di colore neutro, zona letto di marmo, finestre splendide come luce (ma vuoto per ora). Ci disse la signorina che hanno moltissima roba in magazzino per mettere nel nuovo museo, così si comprende come il vecchio sia un poco povero. Anche questo museo (come tutti) serve per scuola d'arte, per studio, ma solo per i maschi, per le donne c'è, ma in un altro museo. Il Fogg Museo è nel centro dell'Università, fu regalato al Sigg. Fogg dalla moglie morendo, essendo lui uno studioso d'arte. Le scuole universitarie di Boston sono le più rinomate in America (più ancora della Columbia a New York). Boston è chiamata la città intellettuale dell'America.<sup>362</sup>

The paintings bought by Warburg from Contini Bonacossi did not enter the permanent collection of the Fogg Art Museum; both the Botticelli and the Lorenzetti were eventually returned to Warburg. Subsequently the paintings ended up in prestigious American museums: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

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Bonacossi. The painting appeared to be in the Contini Bonacossi stock according to the Jacquier photoarchive (that stops at 1935) and numerous works by Defendente are quoted by Contini Bonacossi himself in the list he sent in 1921 to Ross at Harvard.<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/230286> .

<sup>362</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 212-213.



(recently deaccessioned) and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. However, at a later time four paintings with a Contini Bonacossi provenance found their way to the Fogg through a generous gift from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation or purchased by the museum from Contini Bonacossi's heirs after the dispersal of the family's collection as in the case of Orazio Gentileschi's *Madonna with the Sleeping Child* (Harvard Art Museum 1976.10) (fig. 43-44).<sup>363</sup> It always enjoyed a special place in Contini Bonacossi's collection: he kept the painting out of the public eye, instead enjoying it in a private setting (like his own bedroom).

The second category of unpublished letters (after June 1927 through 1929) includes Contini Bonacossi's exchanges with Forbes regarding his stock, and Forbes's exchanges with Sachs about possible additions to the newly renovated Fogg. Forbes visited Contini Bonacossi's house in Rome, clearly with the intention of buying works of art for the Fogg, and described his visit to Sachs. Forbes's descriptions are very important because they inform us of the Count's holdings at that time, and because Forbes's valuations offer insight about what works were then sought by American institutions. In April 1928, Forbes visited Contini Bonacossi's house in Rome. In a letter from 25 April 1928, Forbes thanks the Count for the visit and praises the quality of his collection:

Much as I heard of the importance of your collection I was astonished to see the number of distinguished paintings by the great masters which you have gathered together and displayed with so much skill and taste and judgment. I do not know of anyone in Europe who has collected so many notable pictures by great masters of different schools and periods in one house together where a buyer may find rare opportunities to get good pictures. Congratulations.<sup>364</sup>

During this Italian trip, Forbes was indeed acting as a buyer. As we learn from a later letter, in which he asks the Count to send him some photographs of paintings available for sale, he reported to Sachs on the most important works he saw on his

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<sup>363</sup><http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&repoID=18404>; The paintings are: Anonymous Painter *Madonna and Child*, 1962.161 (K1009); Guidoccio Palmerucci, *Madonna and Child*, 1962.158 (M-5); Marco Basaiti, *Portrait of a Warrior*, 1962.159 (K126); Palma il Vecchio, *Portrait of a young Lady*, 1962.162 (K1157). <http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/299919?position=0>, [access 21 July 2016].

<sup>364</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi on 25 April 1928, HUAMA, and Edward W. Forbes papers, 1867-2005, box 112 folder 2430.

trip, including works from the Count's collection, "the largest and the best of anything he has seen." Forbes further informed the Count about his task of buying works for different American institutions, including the Fogg, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Hartford Museum in Connecticut.<sup>365</sup> Soon after, in a letter from 16 May 1928, Contini Bonacossi informs Forbes that since their last meeting he has bought "twenty new paintings and some very important," and that he will mail him some photographs of the works he owns "to give you an impression of the quality of my collection". The Count then asks him to be discreet in discussing his stock with other European and American dealers, adding he will be "very glad to see some of my good things in your museum or in hands of serious collectors and hope that we will be successful."<sup>366</sup>

28 September 1928 Felix Warburg to Forbes

Dear Prof. Forbes Fogg,

Thanks for your note from September 25<sup>th</sup>.

Please let me know a day before you come to New York next time, as our friend Contini of Rome has sent me three paintings for approval, two of which I understand you have seen, and I would like very much to get your opinion regard to their ownership and their value. Meanwhile I hope to see you and Paul Sachs at the wedding of Elizabeth.<sup>367</sup>

19 October 1928 Forbes to Warburg

I find that my recollection of the price of the Piero di Cosimo, St. John, was correct. \$17,000 was the price he has asked for it. I have no record in my note that he made a special Museum price but he may be that in making this offer, it was definitely understood it was a museum price. I found no record of Cima, and apparently I did not ask the price for that. I think I remember seeing it but owing to a misunderstanding I didn't succeed in seeing Contini's collection until a day or two before my departure from Rome. He finally invited me to his house and I worked a large part of the afternoon up to about one o'clock at night seeing his pictures, and I saw so many of them that I do not remember each one individually very well, but I believe the Cima is the one I saw there.

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<sup>365</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi on 10 May 1928. HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes papers, 1867-2005, box 112 folder 2430. 'I am asking Sachs to give the opportunity to purchase in the following order, as I am an official of all three of these institutions. After that, I have asked him to use his judgment in sharing them to people like Mr. Warburg, Arthur Sachs, Miss Frick, Mr. Lehman, and Mr. Straus'.

<sup>366</sup>Letter from Felix Warburg to Edward Forbes on 28 September 1928 HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes papers, 1867-2005, box 112 folder 2430.

<sup>367</sup>Letter from Felix Warburg to Edward Forbes on 28 September 1928, HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes papers, 1867-2005, box 112 folder 2430

I'm not sure whether I saw the Flemish or not. I like the Piero di Cosimo very much, indeed I think it is a picture of rare charm and distinction, and I like the color and other things about the Cima but it is to me on the whole less interesting in spite of its beautiful color. However, of course Cima is a good man too.<sup>368</sup>

By the time Forbes retired from the directorship in 1944, the Fogg collection had become extensive and world-renowned, and the museum was in a new building (opened in 1927) vastly more suited to its purposes. Forbes and Sachs understood that American scholars and students needed to study original works of art. This concept was not new: it had been used in academic institutions around the world (Ashmolean and Fitzwilliam are illustrious forerunners), but the Fogg led the way in the United States. In the years to follow, many American universities and museums emulated the Fogg, a task accomplished (like at the Fogg) with the support of donors, collectors, and foundations across the country.

*Edward Jackson Holmes (1873-1950) and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston*

In addition this relationship with the Fogg Art Museum and its executives, Contini Bonacossi established other connections with the Boston cultural elite. During March 1927, he engaged with Edward Jackson Holmes, first in New York, then in Boston, where Contini Bonacossi travelled with his wife hoping to sell at least two paintings, one by Lorenzo Lotto and one by Velazquez.

16 Marzo 1927

Ieri è venuto il Signor Holmes con la Signora, hanno messo il loro pensiero sul Lotto ed il Velazquez, ci attendono a Boston, forse partiamo sabato sera o Domenica per due giorni e porteremo le pitture con noi.<sup>369</sup>

Holmes, a prominent Boston lawyer, was at the time the director and president of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He was the son of Edward J. Holmes (1846-1884) and Henrietta Goddard Wigglesworth Fitz Holmes (1847-1929).

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<sup>368</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to Felix Warburg on 19 October 1928, HUAMA, and Edward W. Forbes papers, 1867-2005, box 112 folder 2430.

<sup>369</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 199.

21 Marzo 1927

Scappo perché alle 10.30 verrà il Sig. Holmes a prenderci per andare al Museo, del quale lui è il Direttore a vita e sua madre (ora gravemente malata poveretta) è stata si può dire la fondatrice di detto Museo.<sup>370</sup>

Henrietta Goddard Wigglesworth was the heiress to two of the oldest and richest New England families, the Goddards and the Wigglesworths. After her first husband (Holmes) died in 1884, she remarried with Walter Scott Fitz, a wealthy merchant from Boston who made a fortune trading with China. She “enjoyed life at the highest level of Boston society” and was a benefactor and supporter of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.<sup>371</sup> In her honor, on 7 April 1927 her son donated *Portrait of a Man Writing at His Desk*, at the time attributed to Velazquez (21.188), which he acquired from Contini Bonacossi during his visit (fig. 45).<sup>372</sup> Lorenzo Lotto’s *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* (27.189) (fig. 46) was also acquired under the name of his mother, but soon after (in April 1927) sold the work to the Museum of Fine Arts for \$25,000.<sup>373</sup>

On 26 May 1930, Contini Bonacossi sold an additional seven paintings to Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes, bringing the number of paintings with a Contini Bonacossi provenance in the museum’s permanent collection to twelve.<sup>374</sup> Six of these works were by the Venetian artist Veronese: *Actaeon Watching Diana and Her Nymphs Bathing* (59.260) and *Atalanta Receiving Boar’s Head by Meleager* (64.2079), both bought by Contini Bonacossi from Agnew; *Allegorical Figure of Charity* (64.2084) and *Allegorical Figure of Faith* (64.2083), both bought probably by Contini Bonacossi from Fratelli Volterra; *Jupiter with God and Goddesses on Olympus*

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<sup>370</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi 2007, 209.

<sup>371</sup>Lapatin, 2002, 12.

<sup>372</sup><http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/portrait-of-a-man-at-a-writing-desk-32271>; V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 224.

<sup>373</sup><http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/the-mystic-marriage-of-saint-catherine-32272> [access 26 July 2016]”The Marriage of Saint Catherine by Lorenzo Lotto”, 1927, 48-49. The painting was bought by Contini Bonacossi from Colnaghi.

<sup>374</sup>Other than the transactions mentioned in this paragraph, we should recall the two canvases by Livius Mehus acquired by Ross and the *Madonna* bought by Warburg and donated by his wife to Museum of Fine Arts.

(64.2078); and *Jupiter and a Nude* (60.125). Also included was a painting by Cosimo Roselli, *Virgin and Child with an Angel* (64.2077).<sup>375</sup>

In the same year, there was controversy over the attribution of the Velazquez, which resulted in the Museum of Fine Arts filing a compensation claim of \$30,000 against Contini Bonacossi. According to the claim, the change in attribution from Velazquez to an anonymous Venetian painter significantly lowered the work's value. In 1953 the museum's then-director, W.G. Constable, reached an agreement with Contini Bonacossi over the sale of the disputed work, "...in 1927 at the time considered as authentic work of the Spanish master."

30 June 1953, Florence

In order to settle in a friendly way the difference of opinions about the *Portrait* attributed to Velazquez and sold by me to the late E.S. Holmes, Esq., I will pay the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston the sum of \$30,000, to be paid as follows: \$5,000 now directly to the Museum of Fine Arts. The further payments will be done by installments of no less of \$5,000 dollars each year. If I can afford to settle the full amount, I will willingly undertake to do so earlier. All the payments will be made to the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>376</sup>

Although the Count complied with the agreement, sending the payment for the first installment on 30 June 1953, at the time of his death, the case was not settled and the amount not fully covered.<sup>377</sup> Hence, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston filed a formal claim with the State of Massachusetts against Contini Bonacossi's estate. The family settled the case in March 1958.

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<sup>375</sup>For the whole list of paintings with a Contini Bonacossi provenance at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. [http://www.mfa.org/collections/search?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=contini%20bonacossi](http://www.mfa.org/collections/search?search_api_views_fulltext=contini%20bonacossi) [Access 26 July 2016].

<sup>376</sup>Contini Bonacossi Family Private Paper, Capezzana, (Prato), Italy.

<sup>377</sup>According to the court documents related to this claim in the Contini Bonacossi's family papers in Capezzana, the count was supposed to pay the amount of \$30,000 in five installments on 30 June 1953 of each succeeding year.

*Maitland Griggs (1872-1944), Myron Taylor (1874-1959), Simon Guggenheim (1867-1942), Jules Bache (1861-1944).*

As we have seen, when Samuel Henry Kress, Contini Bonacossi's most important client, made his first purchase in March 1927, the Italian dealer was already well known in the US, especially in Boston. Between 1925 and 1927, Contini did business with some prominent New York collectors, thus cementing his reputation as a source for major museum collections. As seen in the case of Felix Warburg, Contini Bonacossi was close to the city's German-Jewish financial elite, such as Simon Guggenheim, Maitland Griggs, and Myron Taylor. For 28 years, virtually every year, Contini Bonacossi spent no less than three months in the United States. In New York, he used to rent a whole floor of the St. Regis, Plaza, or The Pierre Hotel. He conducted business either at the hotel or at the home of the prospective buyer. Often, the chosen works were delivered to where they would be displayed. Contini Bonacossi made few mistakes. He was persuasive and knew how to match a painting with a client. In 1925 he sold the aforementioned *Portrait of Prelate* by Lorenzo Lotto for 70000liras to the businessman Percy Straus (fig. 47). The work was eventually donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston and is now attributed to an anonymous painter of the 15th century. Presumably in 1926 he sold a painting by Michelino da Besozzo to Maitland Griggs (fig. 48), who, according to Francis Henry Taylor, was

a humanist and an historian. He was a successful lawyer whose almost prodigal generosity to the institutions which he guided was his greatest joy. For his own pleasure and satisfaction he bought the pictures which he could afford in the full knowledge that he was unable to compete with the contemporary Maecenases; so for more than twenty years he devoted himself to the study of a single period. The trecento and the quattrocento were centuries in which he lived and walked and felt thoroughly at home.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>378</sup>Taylor, 1944, 153-158. The source of the purchase information is given in the entry of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Website. I did not find evidence of this transaction.

Another important New York collector in Contini Bonacossi's circle was Myron Taylor (1874-1959) who, like Griggs, was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Myron Taylor was a lawyer educated at Cornell University.<sup>379</sup> A wealthy industrialist and philanthropist, he served as Ambassador to the Vatican from 1939 to 1950 and was an important diplomatic figure during the Roosevelt (1933-1945) and Truman (1945-1953) administrations.<sup>380</sup>

15 Gennaio 1927

Questa mattina viene il signor Taylor, quello che ha il nostro Mayo di Goya ed il Bronzino.<sup>381</sup>

We do not know if (and if so, how) Contini Bonacossi sold these paintings to Taylor, as no bills of sales can be put forward. Because Taylor and Contini Bonacossi were clearly negotiating during these months, we can assume a sale, but it was likely made through an intermediary.

7 Gennaio 1927

Oggi abbiamo visitato la casa di Sigg. Taylor... assieme a Samuels. Ci sono degli arazzi belli, ambienti grandissimi per New York, i mobili bric à brac, dominante gli spagnoli, ciò che c'è di bello è il nostro Goya, El Majo (maldita sea! Hai hadendro en a quel topi toda Espagna). Il bel bimbo in piedi vestito in bianco del Bronzino, pure nostro. Ha nulla in quadri, così speriamo che ne prenda qualcuno.<sup>382</sup>

A painting by Bronzino, *Portrait of a Boy of the Bracciforte Family of Piacenza* (fig. 49), was owned by Contini Bonacossi before being owned by Taylor; it is traceable as part of the permanent collection of the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester,

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<sup>379</sup>The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Myron C. Taylor," <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Myron-C-Taylor>. His papers are held at Cornell University, being the institution his Alma Mater where he served as a benefactor, <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMM03308.html> ; as well as at the Truman Presidential Library, having Taylor served as Ambassador to the Holy See and as a diplomat during Truman's presidency, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/hstpaper/taylor.htm>, [Access 27 July 2016].

<sup>380</sup>*Who's Who in America*, vol. III, 1951-1960.

<sup>381</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 98.

<sup>382</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 88.

NY.<sup>383</sup> *Portrait of Maja* by Goya, lent by Myron Taylor for the Goya exhibition at the California Legion of Honor in San Francisco in 1937, cannot at this time be identified as the same work Vittoria Contini Bonacossi refers to in her diaries.<sup>384</sup> The close business relationship of Contini Bonacossi and Galerie Heinemann together with presence of the work in the Taylor collection (bought from Hansen Galerie A. G. Lucerne), is insufficient to support the hypothesis of Contini Bonacossi as a prior owner.

13 Marzo 1927

Ritornati a casa mi son dovuta vestire, per andare a prendere il buon Sig. Kress, e portarlo dai coniugi Guggenheim. Siamo ritornati ora, i signori Guggenheim hanno dato un'iniezione al Sig. Kress, parlando tanto delle nostre belle cose e della nostra serietà commerciale, così il nuovo collezionista si è sentito ancora più tranquillo.<sup>385</sup>

Simon Guggenheim was one of seven children. His father Simon Guggenheim Sr., a Swiss Jew who emigrated to the United States in 1848, started one of the most influential and powerful dynasties in American history.<sup>386</sup> By the time Simon Guggenheim started buying from Contini Bonacossi in 1926, he had already retired from public office, having been a Republican Senator for the State of Colorado from 1907 to 1913. Back in New York, in addition to running the family business with his older brothers, in 1925 he established the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. Through his foundation, he became one of the great benefactors for the arts and sciences in American history.<sup>387</sup> In 1926, Guggenheim bought from Contini Bonacossi two Italian Renaissance works with religious subjects: *Adoration of the Magi* by Bonifacio Bembo (1577.167) and the *Four Saints* by Carlo Crivelli

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<sup>383</sup><http://magart.rochester.edu/CUS.18.Provenance.4261?sid=20524&x=444024&x=444025> [access 27 July 2016]. The museum acquired the painting in 1976 from Wildenstein Galleries, New York.

<sup>384</sup> *Exhibition of Drawings and Prints by Francisco Goya (1746-1828)*. California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1937, 27, cat. N. 7

<sup>385</sup> V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 196. This quote clearly shows that the Guggenheims were already Contini Bonacossi's clients by 1927.

<sup>386</sup> Davis, 1978, 243-251.

<sup>387</sup> The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, <http://www.gf.org/>



(1956.92).<sup>388</sup>According to Fausto Nicolai, the American scholar Frederick Mason Perkins was instrumental in facilitating Contini Bonacossi's 1933 sales to the Guggenheims of four paintings of the Italian School, bringing to six the number of documented sales from Contini Bonacossi to the Guggenheims.<sup>389</sup>A year later, Contini Bonacossi sold to Bache for \$37,500 *Deposition*, an illuminated miniature at the time attributed to Mantegna (fig. 50). The Count apparently bought the work from his close friend Talleyrand; it was donated by the Bache estate to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1949.<sup>390</sup>

*Wilhelm R. Valentiner (1880-1958) and Ralph H. Booth (1873-1931)*

Contini Bonacossi was aware of the cultural excitement and the economic growth experienced by Midwestern cities like Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland and Buffalo during the early decades of the 20th century. During 1926-28, he visited these major centers, networking with museum directors and private collectors.<sup>391</sup> Although these trips did not produce any documentable business deals, I will highlight the case of Detroit because of the presence of Ralph Hammond Booth, a Contini Bonacossi client, and of Wilhelm Valentiner, Bode's pupil and Colin Agnew's best friend. In the winter of 1927, Contini Bonacossi visited the Detroit Institute of Arts. They arrived in Detroit in late January with Detlev von Hadeln.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>388</sup>These works were eventually donated by Simon Guggenheim's wife Olga Hirsch to the museum in 1956. For the Bembo: <http://denverartmuseum.org/object/1957.167> [access 28 July 2016]; For the Crivelli: <http://denverartmuseum.org/object/1956.92> [access 28 July 2016]. According to the Denver Art Museum provenance record, Contini Bonacossi acquired the panels from the Galleria Sangiorgi in Italy.

<sup>389</sup>Nicolai, 2015, .6-8; 14-16. The paintings are two panels by Filippino Lippi *Crucifixion* (fig. 96) and a *Double Portrait; Four Saints* by Taddeo di Bartolo and one panel attributed to the Master of the Louvre Annunciation *A Saint Preaching*. The essay reports information also on the whereabouts of the works.

<sup>390</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 83. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436517>.

<sup>391</sup>These trips are very well documented in Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, 2007. A critical analysis and review of these primary sources has been proposed by Zaninelli, 2004.

<sup>392</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 117-118.

1927 was one of the most interesting years in the museum's history, as it had just opened a new building. It was a boom time for the city, as well as for rich donors like the newspaper magnate Ralph Hammond Booth, the banker Julius Heinrich Hass (1869-1931), and Edsel Ford (1893-1943), who were actively involved in the development of the Institute of Arts, a municipal institution created by private citizens in the mid-1880s.<sup>393</sup>In 1921, the German art historian Wilhelm Valentiner, previously Curator of Decorative Arts at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, was hired as an art consultant; in 1925 he was made director of the museum. This hiring had a substantial effect on the museum's history. Contini Bonacossi was connected to Valentiner through multiple people: Wilhelm von Bode, Colin Agnew, and Durr Friedley, who worked under Valentiner at the Metropolitan. Valentiner's idea of deploying art geographically and chronologically instead of by media (the old criteria) was clearly inherited from Bode; it transformed the Detroit Institute of Arts into one of the finest museums in the country. When Contini Bonacossi visited, the new building was not yet open, and the few works in the museum's permanent collection had been acquired from Contini Bonacossi in 1925 by the museum or by private collectors, who then loaned them to the museum.

30 Gennaio 1927

Al Museo di Detroit dei quadri nostri ci sono un magnifico Masolino, fondo oro, il Padre eterno con il Cristo in Croce, un Cima, l'Annunciazione, una predella che si dice di Perugino (ed io la credo di Raffaello), due santini dell'Amadeo (regalati da noi) 2 cassoni, una credenza, 1 scultura di Madonna e Bambino di Nino Pisano o scuola, credo sia tutto.<sup>394</sup>

The painting by Masolino is *Trinity*; Valentiner refers to it in the *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit* in 1931 as having been acquired by the museum from Count Contini of Rome in 1925 (fig. 51).

With the exception of the two splendid wings with saints in the John G. Johnson Collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the *Trinity* by Masolino is the only important Florentine master of the transition period from the Gothic to the Renaissance in a public museum in this country. The

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<sup>393</sup>Julius Heinrich Hass was a prominent banker from Detroit. Apparently Contini Bonacossi met the wife in Rome as we learn from V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 116.

<sup>394</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 122-123.

attribution to Masolino was already borne by the painting when it was in the collection of Conte Contini in Rome from who it was acquired by the museum.<sup>395</sup>

The predella by Perugino is *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Restoring Two Partridges to Life* (fig. 52); it was also purchased by the museum directly from Contini Bonacossi in 1925 and is still part of its permanent collection. The painting by Cima da Conegliano, *Annunciation* (fig. 53) was bought by Booth probably during the same years and is the only work forming part of the museum's permanent collection.<sup>396</sup>

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This chapter had the principal aim of informing the analysis of Contini Bonacossi's engagement in the secondary market for Old Masters through archival research. This entailed providing evidence regarding his trade and its recipients. The first section devoted to the illustration of documented acquisitions of works of art from his most frequent suppliers, has the merit to provide for the first time, through an extensive use of unpublished primary sources, provenance records for Contini Bonacossi's purchases and therefore to confirm his prominence in the global art market of the time. The second section, in dissecting the web of his clients, almost exclusively Americans, proves not only the breadth of his clients (private collectors, museum professionals, scholars) but also, because of the philanthropic impetus that drove most of his customers' business interactions, Contini Bonacossi's influence and role in the formation of American art institutions during the inter-war years.

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<sup>395</sup>Valentiner, 1931, 34.

<sup>396</sup><http://www.dia.org/object-info/66f63b63-a91e-4fd6-8991-87828d3f824c.aspx?position=104> [access 29 July 2016].

### Chapter III: Contini Bonacossi's *Gallerie*

“Dealers are as much collectors as traders. An art dealer is one who breaks even on the operation of his gallery from sales to the public, but keeps for his own stock.”<sup>397</sup>

This chapter documents, through critical interpretation of primary sources and photographic material, the display criteria and the identity of the objects that appeared in Contini Bonacossi's two *case-gallerie* (in Rome and Florence) during his years as an *antiquario*. These were the display spaces through which he conducted his business, by inviting prospective clients to view works in his 'home', rather than through a store front. In this way, Contini Bonacossi like many dealers at the top end of the market, veiled the commercial aspect of their collecting and trade. The photographs of the *gallerie*' interiors, although partially published, have never been the subject of scientific or historical consideration, while the textual sources are unpublished and are presented here for the first time. Overall, these sources cover 1921-54. Echoing the chronological order of the archival sources, the text is divided into two main sections, Rome in the 1920s and Florence in the 1930s, based on the location of Contini Bonacossi's two residences for these dates.

The unpublished primary sources from the Count's very early years (1921-1928) are of seminal importance because they fill a gap in the historical accounts of his business. Thus they will be granted deeper consideration. The archival material used in the chapter's first section relates to the Roman years. The three photographs by the Jacquier Brothers were published by Tamassia.<sup>398</sup> The textual descriptions, unpublished, were produced by Contini Bonacossi, as well as by others who visited his houses in a variety of capacities, therefore offering multiple interpretations of his holdings. The authors of these descriptions include a partner at one of the most respected British firms; an American museum director and an American museum curator, shopping for their respective museums, considered as two of the most

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<sup>397</sup>Ackerman, 1986, 27.

<sup>398</sup>Tamassia, 1995, 195, n.50592-94.

authoritative voices on Italian art of the time. Although their recollections are as diverse in scope as the audiences they addressed, they agree unanimously on one fact: Contini Bonacossi had many fine objects, displayed in his house like a museum, for which he asked a very high price. The primary sources used for the second section on the Florentine years (1933-1955) are lists from 1948 and notes from 1954 by Contini Bonacossi's nephew, Sandrino Contini Bonacossi (an art historian and his business assistant). The former are available for public consultation in the archives of the Soprintendenza dei Beni Artistici e Storici in Florence, while the latter are privately held.<sup>399</sup> The photographs of the Florentine villa have been published by Lazzeri and Colle in 1995 and most recently by the Uffizi Gallery in 2018.<sup>400</sup>

The unpublished documentation from his early years presented here contradicts the assumption that considers Contini Bonacossi's ensemble of artworks displayed in his houses as a personal collection, rather than a showroom. To date, the double nature of his work as a collector-dealer, and so the function of his *case-gallerie*, has been misunderstood. As Martin Ackerman reminds us, dealers are complex figures being 'as much collectors as traders', a definition that suits Contini Bonacossi's case well. Indeed, the analysis of these early sources regarding the beginnings of his activities in particular led me to define him not as a collector of Old Masters in a canonic way, but as an Old Masters dealer who used a museological structure as a marketing and research tool for his house-showroom. Contini Bonacossi used his collecting to create a sophisticated, museum-like setting for his dealership activities. Therefore, his stock displayed in his *gallerie*, in Rome as well as in Florence, needs to be considered as a curated inventory.

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<sup>399</sup>Archivio di Giovanni Poggi, Serie VII, Collezioni e Lasciti, n. 134, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della città di Firenze-. The finding aid has been published by Lombardi, 2011.

<sup>400</sup>Colle- Lazzeri, 1995.

As discussed in the introduction, I adopted Bargellini's definition of *antiquario in casa e galleria* to introduce Contini Bonacossi.<sup>401</sup> This terminology allowed me to present him as an art dealer who bought and sold works with the care of a collector (or better, a curator) to build collections for his clients. After all, as Bellini argued, "un antiquario si giudica da quello che può mostrare, non da quello che non ha più".<sup>402</sup> By choosing to market his works through a house-showroom (*casa e galleria*) instead of a window gallery, the Count staged his wares purposely erasing any boundaries between the merchandise and the personal collection, the store and the private home. This environment charmed potential clients; the coziness of the domestic atmosphere played with the gravitas of the commercial context, conferring on it an aura of exclusivity.

For this chapter, it is crucial to define Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* as a commercial space devoted to the display of an ensemble of objects for sale, and therefore not interchangeable with the word collection as canonically defined by Pomian and widely accepted by historians of collecting:

A collection is a set of natural or artificial objects, kept temporarily or permanently out of the economic circuit, afforded special protection in enclosed places adapted specifically for that purpose and put on display.<sup>403</sup>

This statement could appear ambiguous when applied to an *antiquario in casa e galleria*, as in Contini Bonacossi's case. Indeed, the primary sources (especially from 1921-28) show that most of the artworks Contini Bonacossi displayed in his house -- in the 1920s as well as in the years after the war -- had a price and could be purchased through negotiation. It is clear that his objects were not "permanently or temporarily excluded from the economic circuit," a primary condition for Pomian's definition of a collection, as they were for sale. Yet it is also the case that Contini Bonacossi structured his showroom like a museum. The result was a gallery, in Rome as well as in Florence, where the interests of the dealer did not seem to compete with the interests of the collector (*casa e galleria*). This public or,

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<sup>401</sup>Bargellini, 1981, 103.

<sup>402</sup>Bellini, 1947, 21.

<sup>403</sup>Pomian 1978, 15.

considering the intimate setting of his house, semi-public connotation conferred to the objects explains the use of the word *galleria* (gallery) rather than collection. Contini Bonacossi's awareness of his gallery's semi-public function evolved together with the evolution of his *status quo*, as the comparison of the two residences will show. There is no question that Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* had the primary task of reflecting the Count's double nature as a collector-dealer (*antiquario*). He had to prove his business skills by supplying the market with the best Old Masters paintings, as well as proving his up-to-date connoisseurial knowledge by promoting artists and schools that had been rediscovered by contemporary scholars. Therefore it is proper to view Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* as a semi-public space, located in his house, devoted to the display of a curated inventory. This distinctive trait, combined with the constant tension between the public function of his holdings and their commercial use, as well as his connection with an extensive network of clients, dealers, and scholars, makes Contini Bonacossi worthy of academic consideration. In bringing to light unpublished documents regarding his holdings over the years, I aim to lay the foundation for further comparative studies of other contemporary dealers or collectors operating according to the same precepts.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>404</sup>Lamberti, 1980, 1-18. In this essay on the Italian collector Riccardo Gualino active during the same years as Contini Bonacossi, Lamberti suggested the idea of comparative studies between the two to "offrire uno spaccato significativo del mercato antiquario e della storia dell'arte italiana tra le due guerre", an effort at the time of the publication of her essay impossible to undertake due to the lack of known documentation regarding Contini Bonacossi's holdings. A first attempt to compare Contini Bonacossi with Gualino is offered in Zaninelli, 2010, 81-89.

As pointed out in the first chapter, in his very early years, Contini Bonacossi sold himself primarily as a collector devoted to art dealing, rather than strictly as an art dealer. He was amateur *privé* [...] *qui ne fait pas du tout de commerce*,” as he wrote in 1914 in his first letter to Bode.<sup>405</sup> However, over the course of forty years, Contini Bonacossi cemented his reputation as one of the most successful Italian *antiquari* of the first half of the 20th century and, as such, he made continual efforts to prove his connoisseurship through the acquisition and display of the artworks for his own stock or for his clients. Contini Bonacossi distinguished himself from other Italian dealers of the time (such as Raul Tolentino, Luigi Grassi, or Elia Volpi) by the way he positioned himself in the marketplace. He never held a public sale, either in Europe or in the United States, and he did not use a saleroom to showcase his holdings. His platform was his house (or, when travelling, a hotel suite in New York City), his business strategy the private sale. He selected his visitors and the display criteria, and the décor was “the material projection of his own identity in a specific space and time”.<sup>406</sup> Hence the reason why probably he never showed his merchandise at auction, because, according to the general marketing criteria of the time, a saleroom display was necessary to fit the image of the auction house. Contini Bonacossi was in touch with the most significant scholars of the time, who substantiated and vetted the attributions of his artworks and advised him on purchases. There was a relationship between the connoisseurial debate among the leading art historians in Contini Bonacossi’s network and the presentation of his artworks in his galleries. Analyzing this relationship will show the historical pertinence of Contini Bonacossi’s activities. If we exclude Roberto Longhi, whose special relationship has already been examined in the first chapter (and whose archive is not publicly available), it was Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929) that played the most influential role, because their interactions occurred at the very beginning of Contini Bonacossi’s career and acquisition campaigns, at least according to the available documentation. These relationships are

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<sup>405</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 27 February 1914. SMB-ZA, IV/NL Bode 1304, 6.1.1

<sup>406</sup>Potini, 2004, 18.



relevant also because they clarify the cultural mediations that allowed Contini Bonacossi to evolve from an *amateur privé* to a successful art dealer, one who was aware of his cultural and social responsibility. This awareness was expressed in his efforts to organize and display his holdings in a museological structure. And near the end of his life, after World War II and the accusations of Nazi collaboration, Contini Bonacossi came to fully realize the public function of his gallery, when he decided to bequeath to the city of Florence all the artworks in his possession at the time (this was not accomplished). This process of elevating what was a showroom, albeit a highly sophisticated one, to a cultural and educational space with the capacity to influence national museum collecting and display, was well expressed by Lionello Venturi, who wrote regarding the similar collection of Riccardo Gualino:

La collezione di Riccardo Gualino non é soltanto il risultato edonistico dei momenti liberi dagli affari, non é soltanto lo specchio di un gusto colto e raffinato, ma é anche iniziativa che potrà esercitare la sua azione sulla cultura italiana.<sup>407</sup>

The available documentation this research has brought to light, covering Contini Bonacossi's career over the decades at given times, is substantial enough to allow us to discuss the objects in relation to one another and to the art historical debate that was unfolding during the years of his activities. The primary sources used in this chapter to document his holdings -the lists, correspondence and reports from 1921, 1924, 1928, 1948 and 1954- are all unpublished (posthumous lists after 1955 have not been considered). Among those, especially the documents from Contini Bonacossi's early years of business activity, presented here for the first time, are of remarkable importance as they reveal previously unknown connections at the core of his success. The well-known bills of sale from 1927-1955 documenting his crucial trade with Samuel Henry Kress, while essential for reasons discussed in the next chapter, do not add information in relation to his showroom comparable to the unpublished sources that are newly presented here.

These activities occurred at an auspicious time for art and for American cultural history; the early decades of the 20th century were known as the Age of Museums, or

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<sup>407</sup>Lamberti, 1980, 8.

the “third phase”, in which a “museum flourished at the expense of private collections” (as Haskell and Pomian have both pointed out). This was especially true in the United States, where the history of museum collections cannot be separated from the history of the art market and cultural philanthropy.

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As discussed in the first chapter, Contini Bonacossi moved back to Italy from Spain around 1909. He lived in Rome, first at Via Tevere 7 and then, in the early 1920s, moved to Via Nomentana 60, a more prestigious location and probably a bigger house. If I exclude the holdings that Contini Bonacossi communicated to Bode in 1914, no documentation, either textual or photographic, from his first Roman residence is known to exist. Luckily, a variety of archival materials, both textual and visual, documenting his collection and its display in the second Roman residence has survived. Still unpublished, they are all available for public consultation at the Zentralarchiv in Berlin (correspondence between Bode and Contini, partially examined in the first chapter), the Getty Research Institute (Duveen Archives in situ and online), the Harvard Art Museums Archives (Edward Waldo Forbes Papers), and the Kress Archives at the Kress Foundation in New York. I will also use the only three photographs available of the interior of the Via Nomentana residence taken by the Florentine photographers Giuseppe and Vittorio Jacquier.<sup>408</sup>

*1921. Genius Loci for sale: Contini Bonacossi's list for Denman Ross.*

The oldest list (so far available) of Contini Bonacossi's holdings was attached to an unpublished letter from the Count to Denman Ross dated 26 July 1921.<sup>409</sup> The letter and the circumstances of their acquaintance have already been discussed in the first chapter. Here only the list will be considered. Similar to a portfolio, the list was probably compiled by Contini Bonacossi himself and sent to the Harvard professor for consideration. It consists of one hundred and forty-nine works by seventy-eight artists, grouped by pictorial school. Representing the French School, there were

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<sup>408</sup>Tamassia, 1995.

<sup>409</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Denman Ross on 26 July 1921, HUAMA, Edward Forbes Papers, box 122 folder 2430.

twenty-four works by eleven French artists (five Fragonards, one Watteau, one Lancret, one Boucher, three Ingres, one Chardin, three Robert Hubert, one Clouet, five Le Nain, two school of the South, one Perroneau); ten works by five Spanish artists representing the Iberian school (three Zurbaran, one Velazquez, three El Greco, one Murillo, two Goya); five works by five Dutch artists in representation of the Netherlands (one Jordaens, one Rubens, one Rembrandt, one Rogier van der Veyden, one Antonis Moor). Italy was represented by eight regional schools: thirty works by twenty Venetian artists (one Gentile Bellini, two Giovanni Bellini, one Giorgione, two Titian, two Palma, two Paris Bordone, two Tintoretto, four Bassano, one Veronese, five Lotto, two Cariani, one Sebastiano del Piombo, one Crivelli, one Lazzaro Bastiani, one Antonello da Messina, one Antonello da Saliba, one Bartolomeo Montagna, one Cima da Conegliano, two Tiepolo, two Guardi); seven works by five artists from the Veronese school (one Pisanello, two Caroto, two Liberale, one Giolfino, one Morone); one from Padua; twenty-eight works by fifteen Northern Italian artists (five Defendente Ferrari, one Gaudenzio Ferrari, three Bramantino, one Solario, two Bergognone, two Boltraffio, one Luini, one Ercole de Ferrari, one Boccaccio Boccaccino, one Foppa, one Costa [Lorenzo], four Moretto, two Romanino, two Moroni, one Correggio); fifteen works by nine Florentine artists (one Beato Angelico, one Domenico Veneziano, two Pollaiolo, one Ghirlandaio, two Piero di Cosimo, five Bronzino, one Salviati, two Rosso); six works by four artists from Umbria (two Raphael, one Melozzo, one Perugino, two Timoteo Uti); an unspecified number of Sieneese and Florentine primitives; and a few Renaissance sculptures (Amodeo, Laurana, Desiderio da Settignano, Rossellino, Cozzarelli, Sansovino, Nino Pisano).

This list does not allow us to assess the intrinsic value of the works in question, as no additional details crucial for the identification of each painting -such as titles- are provided. But some considerations regarding Contini Bonacossi's perspective on art history in correlation with a general knowledge of the period can be offered. In setting apart the schools of Verona and Padua, for example, he shows awareness of the polyphony of Italian Renaissance art. He also demonstrates awareness of the most up-to-date research findings of the period. For example, he does not isolate the

school of Ferrara from the schools of Northern Italy including Lorenzo Costa and Ercole da Ferrara in the same group with multiple Lombard artists (Bramantino, Solario, Borgognone, Boltraffio, Luini, Boccaccino, Foppa, Romanino, Moretto, Moroni), two Piemontese painters (Gaudenzio and Defendente Ferarri), and one Correggio. Only recently 'rediscovered' at that time by Adolfo Venturi, the Ferrarese School was considered to have produced work that serves as "a document of the precocious realism typical of Northern Italy in the development of Italian art of the Cinquecento."<sup>410</sup> Its definition, and importance, was cemented only ten years later, in 1934, in the volume *Officina Ferrarese* published by Longhi.<sup>411</sup> The inclusion in the Venetian School of painters like Antonello da Messina, Crivelli, and Lotto, shows Contini Bonacossi's influence in mapping and understanding the role these artists played in the development of the school of Venice.

Dividing works into broad pictorial and geographical schools (French, Spanish, Flemish, and Dutch) was often done by auction houses of the period. For Contini Bonacossi, the schools assumed a deeper, more detailed meaning in the study of Italian art in particular, in which he played a part in developing a more nuanced historical understanding. Indeed, there is no mention of a generic Italian school by Contini Bonacossi, so his lists represent the multiple expressions of the Italian Renaissance in every region of Italy. My focus here is on the *genius loci*, or the specific traits of each place expressed by its leading artistic figures according to their stylistic affinities, an aesthetic concept dear to American culture. It is interesting to point out the lack of Italian Baroque works, as we know the Count was fond of them. He proved his interest by lending some of his Baroque works (by artists like Assereto and Mola) to the groundbreaking exhibition held at Palazzo Pitti in Florence in 1922, an exhibition devoted exclusively to Italian art of the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup>Venturi, 1914, 7.

<sup>411</sup>Longhi, 1934.

<sup>412</sup>Ojetti, 1922.

The reason for the absence of such works in his *case-gallerie* is likely that his American clients were not interested in Baroque art. As Wilhelm Valentiner wrote in 1923:

Nowadays this style is less popular, partly on account of the weakness of these modern imitations, partly on account of the bourgeois-like character of the Seventeenth Century arts, which lacks the elegance and prettiness of that of the Eighteenth Century, now more in vogue. It should not be forgotten, however, admiration for Rembrandt is growing constantly in this country, it should be remembered that his expressive, somber style, the strong contrast of light and shade in his works, is in close relationship to the principles of the Baroque style.<sup>413</sup>

*1924. The connoisseur's view: Contini Bonacossi's galleria according to Bode.*

The relationship between Alessandro Contini Bonacossi and Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929) has never been explored in the scholarship, and Bode's influence on Contini Bonacossi's early years has been overlooked. The importance of this relationship in the Count's dealings has already been partially investigated in the first chapter through analyzing their correspondence. Bode's impact went well beyond his role as an expert or advisor; he also helped shape Contini Bonacossi's display strategy for his gallery. Contini's adherence to Bode's principles is the most historically important feature of his arrangements. These concepts, launched in the early 1920s in the Count's Roman residence, found triumphant application in the 1930s in his residence in Florence. The decision to adopt them by at least 1924 shows that Contini Bonacossi was in tune with the international art scene, but considerably ahead when compared with the Italian scene of the time.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>413</sup>Valentiner, 1923, 26-32.

<sup>414</sup>Casini, 2016, 407-427; Cecchini, 2008, 57-105; Cecchini, 2013, 431-446; Bertolini-Porfiri, 2014, 287-327; The creation of the Office Internationale des Musées (OIM) in 1926 was a natural answer to a change in the culture of the time. After World War I, European countries felt the urgency of rebuilding and reaffirming their cultural identities, to connect people to their own culture without intimidating them, to introduce culture in people's everyday lives, and not a prerogative of the scientific community. In order to do so in a coordinated effort, the OIM decided to publish a journal *Mouseion*, which will become an international platform for exchanging ideas and a common ground for critical debate on museology and museography, on pedagogy and display. These concepts were of course very dear to the American museum community. The American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums) was created 20 years before, in 1906 to bring museums together

Bode's innovation and rethinking of art display during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was centrally important to museological display internationally; this has been widely recognized and investigated by the scholarship, especially as it relates to the history and development of museums in this period.<sup>415</sup> During the last decades of the 19th century and the first of the 20th period rooms represented the established criteria for public and private display, but a new different approach to art was starting to gain consensus. This new approach, period setting, known in Europe as *Epochenmuseum*, was in fact Bode's invention.<sup>416</sup> Distinction between the terms 'period rooms' and 'period settings' implies that a period room attempts to present some sort of historical accuracy by using actual woodwork etc; while a period setting is organized to create an ambience without necessitating architectural authenticity. As reported by Malcolm Baker, Bode began to write about how art should be arranged as early as 1891, describing principles that were put into practice at Berlin's Kaiser Friedrich Museum, which opened in 1904:

Most museums are now more or less large receptacles in which pictures and sculptures are like herrings one above the other. [...] the visitor's attention is distracted by works standing too near together and by the general ill-effect of overcrowded rooms.<sup>417</sup>

Bode's new approach, as explained by Capius and Seidel among others, was instrumental to appreciating artwork for its style and its historical connections with the other works, without being overly concerned with the architectural correctness of the room. Bode's model presented paintings, sculptures, and applied arts in a collection according to a symmetrical arrangement.<sup>418</sup> His arrangements placed a masterpiece in the center of the wall; a great piece of furniture, usually of the same period, underneath it to attract the attention of the viewer; and, all around, works of

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to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and advocating on issues of concern to the museum community. Private collectors followed the standards suggested by AAM also for the display criteria.

<sup>415</sup>Baker 1996, 143-153.

<sup>416</sup>Pilgrim, 1978, 4-23. "1923 saw both Chicago and Detroit open a series of European period rooms. Detroit boasted of having period rooms, 15 but these, in reality, were just galleries evoking the spirit of the Gothic, Italian Renaissance and Northern Baroque'.

<sup>417</sup>Baker, 1996, 144.

<sup>418</sup>Capius, 2007, 145-176; Seidel, 1999, 55-109.

lesser quality, displayed for comparison with the masterpiece in the center.<sup>419</sup> This aesthetic approach is associated with a philological approach that aims to delight and to educate, both historically and aesthetically. It was replicated not only by Contini Bonacossi in Rome and Florence, but also by Samuel Kress in his New York penthouse (fig. 57-58). Indeed, Bode's principal goal was to create a cultural context, not to evoke a certain period; the masterpiece was highlighted to "draw the spectator's attention to a specific piece, while the arrangement of the rooms recognized the visitor's freedom of movement so that there is no strict consequence of rooms or line to follow through the collection."<sup>420</sup> This educationally inspired criterion was happily adopted in particular by American institutions, like the Detroit Institute of Art (the 1919-27 arrangement by Wilhelm Valentiner, Bode's pupil), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1928 arrangement), and the Cleveland Museum of Art (1913-1916).

In Italy in the late 19th century, private collectors rejuvenated the Italian scene by following the example of their American counterparts, as explained by Rosanna Pavoni in her essay on the Bagatti Valsecchi collection in Milan:

Il complesso artistico Bagatti Valsecchi di Milano costituisce un esempio di creazione di un modello destinato a diffondere l'idea ottocentesca di Rinascimento attraverso le collezioni d'arte appositamente acquistate per arredare la casa. [...] un modello eletto tale da una variegata gama di critici e imprenditori che avevano intuito le potenzialità di questa eccezionale dimora di rappresentare [...] le qualità riconosciute alla fine del XIX secolo all'immagine artistica rinascimentale nella sua declinazione domestica: bellezza, armonia, dignità. [...] Ed è per la schiera dei 'nuovi principi', avidi di circondarsi di collezioni ispirate ai tesori delle antiche famiglie, ma utilizzate modernamente e borghesemente per arredare la casa, che i Bagatti Valsecchi si pongono come modello di buon gusto".<sup>421</sup>

At the turn of the century though, Italy stalled, prolonging the 19th century display principles well into the 1930s. Italy seemed immune to Bode's innovations, as well as to the example offered by Berenson in his Florentine villa I Tatti, where he created a *locus amoenus*, as described by Patricia Rubin:

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<sup>419</sup>Niemeyer-Chini, 2009.

<sup>420</sup>Baker, 1966, 144.

<sup>421</sup>Pavoni, 1997, 165; 170.

The *locus amoenus* created by the Berensons for themselves and their friends, although alluding to Renaissance architectural style in its chosen idiom, was an evocation of or an invocation to cultural values, not an imitation of Renaissance forms. It was to be a setting congenial to study and to reflection as well as a site for convivial conversation...Its language was cosmopolitan and proclaimed clearly that its owner was “a man of the world.”...The Berensons created around themselves a force field of taste, removed from geographical and historical contingency.<sup>422</sup>

As explained by Dalai Emiliani, in her essay ‘*Faut-il brûler le Louvre?. Temi del dibattito internazionale sui musei nei primi anni degli anni '30 del Novecento.*’, there was an international debate in the 1930s regarding the need for a general rearrangement of museums and how they displayed art. Despite Fascist propaganda, Italy fell consistently behind international trends, a situation well expressed by Bruno Maria Apollonj from 1935 (as reported by Emiliani):

Lo studio dei musei è trascurato in Italia, perchè le nostre raccolte sono ospitate in antichi edifici aventi interesse storico-aristico, difficile e superfluo tenere conto dei più moderni criteri che si vanno affermando.<sup>423</sup>

As discussed earlier, this new way of displaying art was promoted in Contini Bonacossi’s private collection in Rome and Florence. In Italy in the 1920s (excluding the rearrangement of the Civic Museum of Bolzano by Wart Arslan), Contini Bonacossi used this style of arrangement for his private gallery.<sup>424</sup>In Rome, and on a larger scale in Florence, Contini Bonacossi blended Bode’s symmetrical layouts and rarefaction of objects with Berenson’s inclination to remove “any geographical or historical contingency.” And it is likely that the choices he made in arranging his *galleria* were influenced by Longhi’s scholarship. This is evident in his accentuation of the historical and stylistic connections between the works.

Longhi said years later:

L'opera d'arte, dal vaso dell'artigiano greco alla Volta Sistina, è sempre un capolavoro squisitamente ' relativo '. L'opera non sta mai da sola, è sempre un rapporto. Per cominciare: almeno un rapporto con un'altra opera d'arte. Un'opera sola al mondo, non sarebbe neppure intesa come produzione umana,

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<sup>422</sup>Rubin, 2000, 210.

<sup>423</sup>Dalai Emiliani, 2009, 34.

<sup>424</sup>Angelini, 2015, 57-80.



ma guardata con riverenza o con orrore, come magia, come tabù, come opera di Dio o dello stregone, non dell'uomo.<sup>425</sup>

Adhering to Bode's approach was a marketing tool for Contini Bonacossi; it showed his level of expertise. But it was also a measure of his intellectual and curatorial ambition to present his works according to the highest new standards of display. These criteria for arrangement can be experienced in the room (in the Via Nomentana residence) dedicated to Italian paintings of the Cinquecento (fig. 68). As in the Jacquier photograph, on the short wall of the room, the criteria act as *fil rouge*, holding together a mix of Florentine works with religious and profane subjects through their historical and stylistic connections. The aim here is educational. In the middle, the imposing Michelangelesque (according to Bode's opinion) *Madonna with the Child and Saint Anne*, at the time believed to be by Pontormo (now Jacopino del Conte, fig. 74), is placed at the center of the wall as a shining example of its style. On its right is a work by an artist one generation older, Giuliano Bugiardini's *Madonna of the Palm*<sup>426</sup>(fig. 77), and, to its left, *Portrait of a Man with a Letter* by Salviati, Bugiardini's pupil. On the short wall, similarly, two altarpieces face each other: *Birth of the Virgin* by Gaudenzio Ferrari (fig. 75) and the *Adoration of the Child* by Defendente Ferrari (fig. 76). At the time, *Adoration* was attributed to Spanzotti, who was considered Defendente's, as well as Gaudenzio's, master.<sup>427</sup>

This section will focus on the review Bode wrote in 1924 of Contini Bonacossi's Roman house-gallery. This review is the most extensive and exhaustive source on the Count's inventory and its display at that date.

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<sup>425</sup>Conti, 1980:1093-1117.

<sup>426</sup>Cheney, 1970: 32-40; Freedberg, 1985, 59-65. The panel entered the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC in the 1980s, acquired through Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund from the family Estate. The panel was attributed to Pontormo and exhibited as such in 1940 at the show *Mostra del '500 toscano*, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 1940. In 1948 Federico Zeri recognized the painting as a work by Jacopino del Conte, an attribution still accepted today. <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.65821.html#provenance>. For Bugiardini: <http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&collectionID=28834>; for Salviati: [http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.jsp?decorator=layout\\_resp&apply=true&tipo\\_scheda=OA&id=37504&titolo=Tosini+Michele+%2c+Ritratto+di+uomo+con+lettera](http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.jsp?decorator=layout_resp&apply=true&tipo_scheda=OA&id=37504&titolo=Tosini+Michele+%2c+Ritratto+di+uomo+con+lettera).

<sup>427</sup>Ciaccio, 1907:197.

According to a letter dated 23 October 1924, Bode paid a visit to the house:

Gentilissimo Signor Dottore

La loro partenza ha lasciato tra noi un grandissimo vuoto perche ormai siamo abituati alla loro franca, cordiale, e simpaticissima compagnia [...] Ci auguriamo di riaverli presto tra noi e per un più lungo periodo. Debbo pure esprimerle l'altissimo apprezzamento della mia collezione. Esso, venendo da lei, ha per me un valore incalcolabile e mi servira di sprone per cercare di perfezionarla semore di più. Con lo scopo di alleviare almeno in parte il lavoro che le procurera la recensione generale della mia collezione che ella volle promettermi, mi sono peresso di compilare le accluse liste.<sup>428</sup>

Bode agreed to review Contini Bonacossi's collection on his return to Berlin. To facilitate this task, the Count provided a list of the works in his collection, divided by schools and rated according to their quality. This list is not included in the correspondence held in Berlin, nor is the report made by Bode in November 1924. It is possible that Contini Bonacossi never sent the list. In any case, I do not know if the list ever reached Bode, but I do know that Bode's report reached Contini Bonacossi as it is held in the archives of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation in New York in its English translation. As some of the listed paintings later end up in the Kress Collection, they will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the letter from 4 December 1924, Contini Bonacossi thanked Bode for the report and updated him on his recent purchases.

la sua recensione mi giunse quando stavo sulle mosse per partire per Lucerna, ove avevo un appuntamento con Lulu Böhler and Heinemann. La sua memoria riesce a dare una perfetta esattissima sintesi della mia collezione quale nessun altro scritto avrebbe potuto giungere. [...]<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>428</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 23 October 1924, SMB-ZA, IN/NL Bode 1304. 6.1.1.

<sup>429</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Wilhelm von Bode on 4 December 1924, SMB-ZA, IN/NL Bode 1304. 6.1.1.

Bode's survey bears the vague date of November 1924. His memorandum begins by praising Contini Bonacossi's skill in the display of his objects "essentially limited to the renaissance" according to his own principles, calling it a personal triumph:

What a surprise your collection was I have already told you verbally: not only by the number and quality of the masterpieces, but by their choice and arrangement in your rooms, by the mixture with sculptures and colorful majolicas of the same period and the furnishing of the rooms...This was a small triumph for me, as I have ever striven for this arrangement and furnishing -- as you will know from our Kaiser Friederich Museum. In a certain sense you have created a museum, but have at the same time understood, by the limitation to a certain period, essentially the Renaissance, to obtain a uniform effect in the decoration of your villa.<sup>430</sup>

Bode notes the fact that the Count excluded from his *galleria* paintings with gold backgrounds, which were "very popular within collectors, but not suited for a house, as they were intended for the outfitting of private chapels or travelling altars."<sup>431</sup> By comparing Bode's survey and the photographs of the *galleria*, we can confirm Bode's intention of following the same criteria during his survey: five schools (Venetian, Florentine, Spanish, French, and German) represented by a variety of artists, who are listed according to their stylistic declinations. It also includes a conclusive section on sculptures, "exclusively Italian pieces, mostly from the Quattrocento." In some cases, like the rooms dedicated to the Venetian and Florentine painters of the Cinquecento, Bode's comments act as proper captions for the photographs (fig. 68).

### *School of Venice*

You have been most fortunate in your search for paintings of the Venetian Renaissance. Such a number of master works of almost all the painters of the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento!<sup>432</sup>

The attention given to Venetian and Northern Italian painting of the Renaissance is the most distinctive trait of Contini Bonacossi's galleries in Rome and Florence. It

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<sup>430</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 1.

<sup>431</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 1.

<sup>432</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 2-3.

reflects the great consideration given to these pictorial schools by the Italian literature on art of the period, which were especially important in the development of European-wide stylistic movements of the seventeenth century. Arguably, this predilection bears the fingerprints of Longhi and Fiocco, both Venturi's students. Longhi's essay *Piero dei Franceschi e lo sviluppo della pittura veneziana*, published in the journal *L'Arte* in 1914, describes *in nuce* the stylistic program of Contini Bonacossi's showrooms and the ideas about art that it promoted.

Bode's survey starts with a room dedicated to Venetian painters in Villa Vittoria, the Roman residence (fig. 82). The list starts with two Bellini, *Madonna* (fig. 83) and a *Crucifixion* (fig. 84) "after I acquired it from the Rudolph Kahn Collection, a purchase which was not consummated due to the intrigues of a colleague from Munich"; a Titian (*Saint Sebastian*), *The Farnese Head* and *Pieta* about which "we hope to obtain more definitive knowledge from Professor Longhi"; two Vittore Carpaccio *Prudentia* and *Temperantia* (High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Kress Collection, fig.117); a small *Madonna* by Crivelli, two *Saints* by Francesco Bissolo and a *Holy Family* by Antonello da Saliba (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Kress Collection); two *Madonna* by Bartolomeo Montagna.<sup>433</sup> The list continues with a work by Sebastiano del Piombo, *Man with a Falcon* (fig.130), a painting that "magnificently represents this master."<sup>434</sup> As a counter piece, Bode lists a portrait by Tintoretto, *Man with a Fur*, (now Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 33) and a *Portrait of a Lady* (possibly Henrietta), as well as two mythological paintings that can probably be identified as *Athena and Arachne* (fig. 99) and *Venus and Adonis* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 34). Among the portraits, Bode mentions the Veronese painting *Count Della Porta with his Son Adrian* (fig.26) and three paintings by Lorenzo Lotto: *Holy Conversation with Saints Sebastian and Roch* (now National Gallery of Art, Ottawa, Canada), *Holy Family* (possibly now the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Kress Collection), and *Portrait of a Lady that stands before a*

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<sup>433</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 2. Shapley, II, 54; Shapley, II, 48.

<sup>434</sup>The painting is now in Sydney as a work by Niccolo dell'Abate. (167.1991) Art Gallery of New South Wales, acquired in 1991

*curtain*.<sup>435</sup> Bode also lists *Holy Conversation* by Bonifacio Veronese (Columbia Museum of Art, Kress Collection 1962.2), an unidentified painting by Schiavone, and three paintings by Bassano of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water).<sup>436</sup> A fourth painting from the same series was at the time in private hands in Berlin, so Bode is eager to know “how the portrait of a shepherd approaches Giorgione and how the large portrait of a lady can be proven as a late work by Catena will, I hope, soon be told to us by the Longhi catalogue.”<sup>437</sup> Bode is here referring to a project, never accomplished, in which Longhi attempted to write a systematic catalogue of Contini Bonacossi’s gallery. We do not know why this project was not completed (even after the Count’s decision in 1948 to notify the Italian government about his collection). Longhi’s task was partially accomplished through the creation of a catalogue of the Spanish paintings in Contini Bonacossi’s possession for an exhibition in Rome in 1930.<sup>438</sup> The primary sources show the transitory character of Contini Bonacossi’s gallery, especially for the Italian paintings; this was due to the sale of some of his holdings not too long after Bode’s report. These sales probably delayed the catalogue. The War and subsequent investigations into Contini Bonacossi’s sales to Goering (discussed in the first chapter) as well as the death of the owner made Longhi’s project impossible. *Sleeping Venus with Two Doves*, attributed to Pordenone, was later sold to Goering (now in the Uffizi Gallery, not in the gift, but since repatriated, fig.111).<sup>439</sup> *Resurrection of Christ* by Lazzaro Bastiani concludes this section. Two photographs showing the arrangements of some of these Venetian paintings in this room in the early ‘20s have survived.

### *Painters of the Terra Firma*

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<sup>435</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 3; Shapley, II, 163.

<sup>436</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 4, Shaply, II, 176.

<sup>437</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 4.

<sup>438</sup>Longhi-Meyer, 1930.

<sup>439</sup>See discussion on Goering sales in Chapter I.

Bode's survey moves on to the painters of the *Terra Firma*; in Bode's aesthetics, these are painters stylistically affiliated with Padua, Ferrara, and Verona, "which are more or less dependent on the School of Venice."<sup>440</sup> Among the works he highlights are *Allegory Black and Gold* (figg.54-55-56) attributed to the Ferrarese painter Ercole Grandi which he thought "must represent Mantegna, whose similarly painted inserts in architecture the Ferrarese here imitates."<sup>441</sup> The work is discussed by Bode regarding the lack of paintings in the gallery by the master Andrea Mantegna. According to Bode, Mantegna is the artist who "aside from Venice exerted the greatest influence on the artists from Padua to the Savoy."<sup>442</sup> And he expressed confidence in Contini Bonacossi's capacity to find a Mantegna, which in fact happened sometime after 1924 but before 1928, when a Mantegna miniature *Deposition* was offered to Forbes in 1928 for \$40,000 (fig. 50). Ultimately Forbes did not purchase it, but this miniature found its way to New York thanks to Jules Bache's acquisition for \$37,5000, likely in 1929 (probably through the mediation of Marquis de Talleyrand), and was bequeathed by Bache's family to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1949.<sup>443</sup>

#### *Masters of Ferrara*

Next are the Ferrarese masters. Contini Bonacossi had very important works like Francesco Cossa's *Madonna and a Gold Background*(fig. 61); *Sorrowing of Christ*, at the time attributed to Ercole Grandi and now considered a work by Carpaccio (perhaps fig. 92); and *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, "with its landscape effect and the fine portrait of the donor in the foreground," by Dosso Dossi.

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<sup>440</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 4.

<sup>441</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,4.

<sup>442</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,4.

<sup>443</sup>The miniature now is attributed to Girolamo da Cremona (Metropolitan Museum of Art n. 49.7.8) as we learn from Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's diaries, Marquis de Talleyrand was probably acting as an art broker, see Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 85. For this sale, see discussion in Chapter II.

### *Masters of Verona*

In this group Bode lists six artists and five works: *San Sebastiano* by Liberale (fig. 62); *Lucretia* by Giolfino (fig. 63), “his beloved Lucretia”; an unidentified painting by Falconetto; the *Annunciation* by Francesco Morone (fig. 64); a *Portrait of a Monk in White* (now attributed to Lorenzo Lotto, fig. 70) and *Adoration* by Domenico Morone (fig. 65); and a small *Madonna* by Caroto (fig. 66).<sup>444</sup>

### *Lombard Masters*

In this section Bode lists six artists represented by eight “interesting paintings of the Lombard masters, scarce on the market, of the early Renaissance.” *John the Baptist Delivering a Sermon*, (fig. 67), has a very interesting attribution history. In 1924, it was attributed by Bode to Foppa when in the Contini Bonacossi *galleria* in Rome. As per the bill of sale in the Kress Archive, on 19 May 1929 Contini Bonacossi sold it to Samuel Kress as by an anonymous Pre-Leonardesque master, disregarding Bode’s attribution. It then entered the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC in 1939 as a Kress gift as a work by Benedetto Bembo (as proposed by Wilhelm Suida in 1932), to change again in 1966 to Circle of Niccolo da Varallo (as proposed by Shapley in her systematic catalogue of the Italian paintings in the Kress Collection).<sup>445</sup> This is one of several instances in which paintings that moved from the Kress private collection to public institutions (above all the National Gallery) changed in attribution and not only when passing from the dealer to the collector. Indeed, what is interesting here is that Bode’s attribution of the painting while it was Contini Bonacossi’s property changed when the work was sold to the client Kress. A more systematic survey of the changes involving the paintings he sold to Kress will be offered in the next chapter. Accurately reporting this kind of archival information is of crucial importance in studying the art market and collecting. Exact information on the attribution of a work at the time of the sale, and the eventual changes made to the attribution in the process, gives us invaluable

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<sup>444</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 5. Shapley, 1966, II, 163.

<sup>445</sup>Shapley, 1966, II, 15.

insight into the popularity of an artist, sale strategies, valuation, and market demand at a given time. It also facilitates provenance research and demonstrates the collector's taste.

Bode's survey then highlights two paintings by Ambrogio Bergognone, Foppa's pupil, *Madonna and Crucifixion*; two works by Bramantino, *Madonna* and a series of saints that "are now gathered together as a predella, but were probably originally ornament of the pillars of a large altarpiece." He declares two works by the Piemontese artists, Defendente Ferrari *Adoration of the Magi* (Fig. 76), and Gaudenzio Ferrari *Birth of the Virgin* (fig 75) which were displayed in the same room with the Florentine painters (as we can see from the photograph to be further discussed below) to be more important than a small *Saint Sebastian* by the Milanese Luini.<sup>446</sup>

#### *Masters of the Italian Western Provinces: Brescia, Bergamo, Cremona*

Bode's preference for listing works by stylistic criteria, rather than by location, is here strongly evident. In separating the cities of Brescia, Bergamo, and Cremona from their home region of Lombardy and instead affiliating these cities with Venice "its western colonies" (which is to their east and part of the region of Veneto) as he did with Ferrara and Verona, he shows his alignment with Longhi's aesthetic and with Contini Bonacossi's adherence to Longhi's studies, already apparent during the Roman years.<sup>447</sup>

In the Western provinces of Brescia and Bergamo, the Venetian art had its most enthusiastic adherents in Romanino, Moretto and Moroni. Of all, of whom your gallery has good examples. Among others by Moroni an excellent

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<sup>446</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 5.

<sup>447</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 5. Roberto Longhi published his monographic study on the Ferrarese painters in 1934. The "Officina Ferrarese" is still nowadays considered a fundamental reading for the investigation of these painters and their impact in the development of Northern Italian painting. We should mention that Longhi's studies on Venetian painting as well as regional schools were certainly motivated by his years and travels at the School of Advanced Studies funded by Adolfo Venturi in 1905. As we learn from the recent analysis on the school by Lorizzo and Amendola, 2014.



portrait of a monk all in white, with a decorative still life on the table before him.<sup>448</sup>

As these pictures show, all the paintings mentioned above were exhibited in Villa Vittoria's Venetian Room (figg.68-69; 71). Bode notes that Lombard masters of the early Renaissance were especially scarce on the market, and therefore praises Contini for including them.<sup>449</sup>

### *Florentine School*

While praising the small predella by Domenico Veneziano, *The Stigmatization of Saint Francis*, as a "rarity of the first order of the Florentine art of the early renaissance," (fig. 28), Bode points out the lack of masters of the Quattrocento of the Florentine school, like Fra Filippo, Filippino, Fra Angelico, and Verrocchio.<sup>450</sup> He also expressed concerns regarding the attribution of a *Madonna* by the young Giotto and a *Trinity* by Masolino (fig.51) as "there still exists the greatest insecurity," and he hoped to have "a full account in the catalogue of Prof. Longhi."<sup>451</sup> The section ends with Bode advocating the inclusion of a beautiful Madonna or of a portrait by Botticelli, who "in a sense, has left only a visiting card with you," referring to the gallery's "charming angel heads."<sup>452</sup> Together with the Venetian masters and the local schools they influenced, the gallery's works from the High Florentine Renaissance stand out. They impressed Bode to the point that he wrote "there is hardly a museum which has such a number of great works of the masters of this period."<sup>453</sup> Two

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<sup>448</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, The painting by Moroni is the *Portrait of a Monk* (fig. 70) now attributed to Lotto following Longhi's opinion; It was bought by Kress in 1932. K218, see Shapley, 1966, II, 163, fig. 394.

<sup>449</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 5.

<sup>450</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 6.

<sup>451</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 6. The Trinity by Masolino ended up in Detroit, see Chapter II.

<sup>452</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, Bode report, 6.

<sup>453</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 6.

painters, Raffaellino del Garbo and Piero di Cosimo, were chosen to represent these two periods of Renaissance Florentine art, while a self portrait by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio “already shows pure Cinquecento character and is closely related to Andrea del Sarto.”<sup>454</sup> An “excellent” *Holy Family* by Albertinelli (now Fra Bartolomeo) from the Panciatichi collection (fig.73) is now attributed to Fra Bartolommeo. In the same manner as the *Madonna of the Palm* (fig. 77) and the *Portrait of a Young Woman* by Bugiardini (fig. 67), Bode seemed to think that the “imposing Michelangelesque large Holy Family” might be the painting now attributed to Jacopino. Bode also considers the portrait by Francesco Salviati to be masterful, like the “young fellow entirely in a white rich costume, close to Bronzino” and a portrait of a gentleman of 1562.<sup>455</sup> (fig. 49).

### *Masters from Umbria*

The survey of Umbrian masters concludes Bode’s review of Italian paintings in Contini Bonacossi’s gallery. Four paintings by four different artists caught his attention: *Crucifixion and Saint Francis* by Antoniazio Romano (fig 72) (exhibited in the same room with a work by Salviati and Jacopino del Conte’s *Madonna and Saint Anne* (fig. 74), “your most interesting painting of this group.”<sup>456</sup> A large “altar painting from 1488,” *Annunciation* by Palmezzano, however in Bode’s opinion can not compete with a “precious” *Madonna* by Gentile da Fabriano and, of course, with the “greatest of the Umbrians,” Raphael. Bode hesitates in offering a definitive attribution of the panel ‘*Autumn*’ to Raphael. He limits his judgment to suggesting that the work might be by Raphael, delegating the task of proving that attribution to

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<sup>454</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,6.

<sup>455</sup>The *Portrait of a young man in white* is believed here to be the portrait sold to Myron Taylor and now in Rochester as a work by Bedoli <http://magart.rochester.edu/Obj4261?sid=1498&x=577337>.

<sup>456</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 7. The painting is now part of the Kress Collection of the Samek Art Museum at Bucknell University in Lewisburg (PA). <http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&collectionID=28202>. Bode mentions also a painting by Federico Barocci (perhaps fig. 90).

Longhi: “how all the *putti* can be proven to be a youthful work by Raphael will be shown us by Dr. Longhi in his catalogue of your collection.”<sup>457</sup>

### *The Spaniards*

As Bode moved on to the ‘foreign schools’, he appeared pleasantly surprised to have found “a number of prominent works of foreign schools and of their masters.”<sup>458</sup> The Count’s natural connection to Spain, having lived there for years, gave him a first-hand appreciation of that country’s art, which was still little known in Italy. For this reason, his choice of paintings by Spanish masters seemed obvious to Bode. Still, he seems impressed by the quality of the pieces, especially of those by El Greco, of whom the scholar admits of not being “an admirer, despite the high coloristic qualities in many of his paintings, he is too mannerish for me in his drawing”.<sup>459</sup> He seemed especially fascinated by a sketch in light colors, which he describes as “a coloristic gem” and a “small repetition of his most celebrated painting *El Espolio* in Toledo”.<sup>460</sup> The *Sketch of the ceiling* by Goya seemed to Bode “entirely under the influence of Correggio”, although he admits of not knowing anything about a Goya sojourn in Parma. He also points out two still lifes by Zurbaran, one of which is likely the famous *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges, and a Rose* now in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. Despite the discrepancy in the work’s date (Bode probably misread it as 1638 instead of the proper 1633), he is likely referring to the famous still life; this can be seen in the work’s provenance.<sup>461</sup> According to the Norton Simon Museum online catalogue entry, the painting was sold at auction at the Hotel Drouot on 26 May 1922 and bought by Legrand. It is possible that the large portrait by Velazquez is indeed the so-called *Black Knight*.

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<sup>457</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,7.

<sup>458</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,8.

<sup>459</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, Bode report, 8.

<sup>460</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,8.

<sup>461</sup><http://www.nortonsimonfoundation.org/collections/provenance.php?id=F.1972.06.P>

Purchased by Contini Bonacossi in 1917 from the Milanese collector Bernasconi, it recently appeared at a Sotheby's auction as property of Barbara Johnson.<sup>462</sup>(fig. 93).

### *French and Dutch Masters*

Bode offers brilliant insight into Contini Bonacossi's criteria when explaining the choices of French and Dutch masterworks. The scholar observes that these paintings "were brought together from a special, admirable point of view," facilitated by the fact that the Count was living in Rome. According to Bode, Contini Bonacossi bought:

the works which these masters painted during their stay in Rome. By this your French paintings prove the greatest influence which the Italians had on young French artists, which at the same time is so strong, that at first sight we could hold such pictures in your collection as Italian works.<sup>463</sup>

In 1930, Longhi applied Bode's observation in his introductory essay to the catalogue of the Spanish Old Masters in Contini Bonacossi's collection:

Amico di lunga data dell'arte spagnola, che apprese a conoscere in situ, molti anni fa, il conte Contini Bonacossi, nel comporre quella che oggi è considerata la più importante fra tutte le raccolte private di arte italiana, ha molto bene inteso quanto opportuno ed edificante fosse affiancarla con esempi di quella nostra sorella naturale che fu l'arte spagnola: dai veneziani a El Greco e al Velázquez, dal Caravaggio allo Zurbarán, dal Tiepolo al Goya [...] è parso opportuno far conoscere per via diretta quella sezione [della collezione] che per la cultura italiana vuol riuscire più nuova, e, con il sale della novità, più fruttuosa.<sup>464</sup>

Four artists and six paintings are mentioned from the French school. These works represent the Italian influence on French artists, even on Fragonard, "the most French of all French painters of the eighteenth century".<sup>465</sup>This influence can be seen from

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<sup>462</sup>Sotheby's London, *Old Masters and British Painting Evening Sale. The Barbara Piasecka Johnson Collection proceeds to benefit the Barbara Piasecka Johnson Foundation*, 9 July 2014, n.31.

<sup>463</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,9.

<sup>464</sup>Longhi-Mayer,1930.

<sup>465</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report,9.

their leader Poussin to Ingres, Fragonard, and Hubert Robert, making them ‘the most Italian of French painters’. Poussin is present with his:

excellent copy of Giovanni Bellini’s famous *Baccanale*, while a landscape by the young Titian proves how highly Poussin esteemed the landscapes of the classical Venetians and how much he learned from them [fig.78]. Your beautiful woodland scene which (is) enlivened by a few nymphs and forest gods shows this influence in Poussin especially strong.<sup>466</sup>

This work ended up in Contini Bonacossi’s gift to Castel Sant’Angelo and is still there (fig. 78). The two portraits by Ingres are also mentioned in the 1921 list sent to Denman Ross, in which he offered both these paintings and two Fragonards ‘of pure high Renaissance character’ that show the influence of the great Raphael, *Magdalene* and *Andromeda*. *Landscape with Roman Ruins* by Robert Hubert, which looks like work by the Italian artists Sebastiano Ricci and Panini (explaining its inclusion in the Count’s gallery), is also mentioned. The same criteria explain the choices of the Dutch painters. The works in the gallery by Rubens, Justus van Gent, Jordaens, Brouwer, and Frans Hals were produced during the artists’ Roman sojourns. They are *Crucifixion* by Rubens, *Holy Family* by Jordaens (fig. 80) and *the Young Fisherman* by Frans Hals (fig. 81).<sup>467</sup>Bode’s survey ends with brief comments on the gallery’s sculptures and excellent furniture.

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The powerful role the German scholar played in Contini Bonacossi’s success as an expert has been investigated here as well as Bode’s influence in helping ContiniBonacossi unlock the American art market, vetting the dealer’s purchases and introducing him to his many overseas connections, among them, very likely,

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<sup>466</sup>Venturi, 1928, 109-112.

<sup>467</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). Bode Report, 10-11.

Wilhelm Valentiner. In addition, as this section demonstrated, Bode offered curatorial advice to Contini Bonacossi with respect to the display and installation of his often praised *gallerie*. This feature of organizing his stock geographically by school and in mixing genres to consolidate the display as a cultural unit reveals itself to be a key marketing tool in the dealer's success as it was replicated for his gallery in Florence. The following section will focus on the description of Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* in Rome from a completely different point of view, as perceived by a rival dealer firm, the Duveen Brothers, that visited Contini Bonacossi only a year after Bode.

*1925: A commercial view: Contini Bonacossi's galleria according to Duveen*

In 1925, a year after Bode's visit, the news of Contini Bonacossi's stock reached the Duveen firm, which decided to visit Rome to view the famous collection of this potential competitor. The Count, reluctant, agreed to the meeting, probably because it was facilitated by Charles Williams of the Agnews firm. The correspondence between Duveen's employees leading up to the visit is fascinating as it shows how every step was strategically calculated. As we learn from a letter in the Duveen Archives, on 9 December 1925 Ernest Duveen spent "two whole days" at Contini Bonacossi's villa (fig. 82).<sup>468</sup>

On 11 December 1925, Duveen reported on the Count's stock, highlighting a few noteworthy paintings. Some of them were never sold and remained in his holdings until his death.

He has the Bellini "*Crucifixion*" from the Kann collection, which I understand Berenson does not pass as a Bellini, although to me it is a very fine picture, but not what you want. [fig. 84] Then he has two other fine Bellinis, one is a very fine *Madonna in red*, [fig. 83] nursing the child who is asleep, the child being absolutely delightful. Edward Fowles says he thinks he knows the picture and it has been very much restored. The other Bellini is a

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<sup>468</sup>Ernest Duveen Report on Contini Collection, 9 December 1925, Duveen Brothers Records, Series II, Correspondence and Papers, Box 232, reel 87, folder 48, GRI.

most monumental and very beautiful Madonna all in blue, [fig.81]with the child standing up. This picture has been transferred from wood to canvas. I think you had a Bellini of the same subject. Both these Bellinis attracted me very much. He also has a pair of Cimmas, about three feet in height, 15 and 18 inches wide, one representing a woman in a red dress, the other a man. The woman in particular is an absolute little gem. There is also a small circular picture, about 15" to 18" in diameter, passed by everyone as being by Raphael, but Berenson has not seen it. This represents a group of little children in a bacchanale -- absolutely charming. [...] Anyhow, my visit was certainly good [...]. I have arranged that Edward Fowles shall go down with Charlie Williams to see the things."<sup>469</sup>

At this early stage, the nucleus of Bellini's works in the Count's stock was already remarkable, and it grew exponentially in size and quality over the years. For the 1946 Giovanni Bellini retrospective at Venice's Palazzo Ducale Contini Bonacossi provided seven masterpieces by the Venetian artist.<sup>470</sup> Despite Berenson's opinion, the Giovanni Bellini *Crucifixion* (fig. 84) is nowadays considered a masterpiece, a work in which the master achieved a lyricism that found full expression around 1470 in the intensely poetic *Pieta* now in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan. Its modern ownership history starts in Britain, where it was owned by the auctioneer George Fischer, then bought by Agnew, who sold it to Rodolphe Kahn. In 1909, it was bought by Elia Volpi at the Kahn estate, and then resold by Volpi at his 1910 sale in Rome.<sup>471</sup> It is probably at this sale that Contini Bonacossi bought the painting. If so, *Crucifixion* stayed in the Contini Bonacossi stock for almost 60 years; in the 1970s it was sold to the Louvre in Paris by Contini Bonacossi's heirs through the American private dealer Stanley Moss.

Bellini's *Madonna in Red*, (fig. 83)formerly in the Chiesa Collection, then sold at auction in July 2006 and bought by the Italian collector Luciano Sorlini, is a fundamental work of the artist's early mature period; it was painted around 1470. *Tondo with Bacchanal and Putti* at the time was attributed to Raphael. It came from

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<sup>469</sup>Ernest Duveen Report on the Contini Collection, 11 December 1925, Duveen Brothers Records, Series II, Correspondence and Papers, Box 232, reel 87, folder 48, GRI. Charlie Williams was an Agnew's employee; see Saltzman, 2009, 35.

<sup>470</sup>Pallucchini, 1949, 46-47; 72-73; 84-85; 94-95; 114-116;139-141.

<sup>471</sup>Jandolo and Tavazzi, 1910.

the collection of the art historian Pietro Toesca, Longhi's mentor, and was then in the Contini Bonacossi *galleria* until June 1948, when it was sold to the Kress Foundation as part of a group of twenty-eight paintings, including *The Vintage - Invention of Wine* by Raphael, which was donated by Kress to the National Gallery of Art in 1952.

Duveen's employee Fowles indeed returned to Contini Bonacossi's *galleria*, reporting back to Duveen in New York on 3 February 1926. In his letter he points out a few paintings that caught his eye: a full-length figure of saints by Carpaccio; *Adoration of the Magi*, attributed to Pisanello; *Madonna and Saints*, a large tondo by Andrea del Sarto; *Saint Sebastian*, a full-length figure by Titian; and a very fine triptych by Lorenzetti (fig. 41).<sup>472</sup> All the paintings can be identified: *Saint Sebastian*, mentioned also by Bode, nowadays attributed to the Bellini workshop, remained in the Contini Bonacossi stock until 1972, when it was sold at a Sotheby's auction by the Count's heirs. The Lorenzetti triptych, since 1941 part of the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Art, was sold by Contini Bonacossi two years after Duveen's visit to Felix Warburg on 6 January 1927 in New York. The two paintings of saints by Carpaccio were later sold to Kress and are now at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. Pisanello's *Annunciation* and the Andrea del Sarto is probably the same painting sold to Aldred in 1929.<sup>473</sup>

Interestingly, the selections presented by Bode and Duveen are in some instances overlapping, and they present opposing yet complimentary points of view for analyzing a gallery: the scholar's and the dealer's. As an art historian and museum director, Bode was devoted to the visitor's appreciation of artworks. Duveen, a commercial firm, was interested in information about Contini Bonacossi as a potential business competitor, commenting on his network, business strategy, and stock. He wrote:

He [Contini Bonacossi] is very anxious to do business with you as it would be beneficial to both himself and you and there is no doubt that this man buys

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<sup>472</sup>Edward Fowle to Duveen Brother New York on 3 February 1926. Duveen Brothers Records, Series II, Correspondence and Papers, Box 232, reel 87, folder 48, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>473</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007,287.



with great taste, and gets hold of the great things in Italy [...]. This man is a goer and has great taste but fortunately he has not the right idea of what it is appreciated by American collectors otherwise he might be a serious competitor. He has at least four hundred pictures, all by good masters, beside fine furniture and sculptures [...]. They say he is backed up by a large fortune that his wife made in South America. I should say he would need it to keep up such a stock. But I doubt he will last very long. It is impossible for a man to run such a large stock without doing a tremendous amount of current business, which he does not appear to do.”<sup>474</sup>

We do not know what business the Count's wife did in South America, as no evidence so far has come to light in that regard. Duveen's appraisal of the financial situation seems highly unlikely, and is more likely a manifestation of their rivalry. The available information about Contini Bonacossi's financial background comes directly from Vittoria's diaries from the 1920s. They started out with debts, as she writes to her son

28 Gennaio 1927

se Dio vuole, cio che abbiamo ora e tutto nostro. Ma siamo partiti con 8 milioni di debiti. Va bene che vi erano i quadri, ma per pagare occorrono i denari, non vi pare?<sup>475</sup>

Duveen was probably not fully up to date about Contini Bonacossi's activities in the US; at the time he already had several important American clients. Indeed, many of the paintings listed by Bode in 1924 and Duveen in 1925 ended up in private and public collections overseas, as recorded in Vittoria's diaries from 1926-27. Although he was not yet doing business with Samuel Kress -- his most important client, to whom he sold nearly a thousand paintings from 1927 to 1955 -- the high volume of his stock confirms that the conditions existed for creating a profitable business through American clients. If the golden age of American collectors, the so-called cultural imperialists of the previous generation, was about to conclude, the golden age of museums, both American and European, was in full bloom. The late 1920s and 1930s were crucial to developing the new, modern concept of the museum as a learning environment, an institution for research and study, in Europe as well as in

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<sup>474</sup>Duveen Brothers Records, Series II, Correspondence and Papers, Box 232, reel 87, folder 48, GRI.

<sup>475</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 118.

the United States, where museums were building up their acquisition policies, donor money was pouring in, and new wings were being built to display the expanding collections.

*1928: An academic view. Edward Forbes's selection*

Edward Forbes, director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, visited Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* during his 1928 Italian tour. After his trip, he wrote a memorandum to Paul Sachs about the artworks Contini Bonacossi had for sale there. This remarkable source not only informs us what pieces were in Contini Bonacossi's home at this date, but also tells us what Forbes (and therefore Harvard) was considering purchasing for the Fogg Museum's collection, the monetary values of specific works (according to Forbes), and what Contini Bonacossi was willing to sell and at what price. The timing is important too: before the Wall Street crash, a year after the opening of the new Fogg Museum, and right at the beginning of the Contini Bonacossi-Kress partnership.

Forbes divided Contini Bonacossi's merchandise into three groups according to "a snap judgment combined with the capacity of these pictures to stick in my mind after the snap judgment has been made".<sup>476</sup> The groupings were made regardless of monetary value: "Contini has a lot of fine things. It is hard to know how to classify them, i.e. shall I put a \$10,000 picture which we might get ahead of a \$150,000 picture which is hopeless from our point of view or not?"<sup>477</sup> The works are listed by artist and, unlike the list the Count sent to Denman Ross in 1921; Forbes' list provides many details regarding titles, dimensions, quality, and the location of similar works or versions. The works' prices open a window on Contini Bonacossi's view of their values. They are of uneven quality, importance, and price, even within the corpus of the same artist. As in 1921, the Count's portfolio includes paintings from all the European schools, including the Italian Trecento, eighteenth-century French, seventeenth-century Spanish and Dutch, and a preponderance of work by the

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<sup>476</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to (presumably to Paul Sachs), 1928. HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes Papers (1867-2005), box 112, folder 2430.

<sup>477</sup>Ivi, n.446; Ivi, n. 447

Lombard and Venetian schools of the Italian Renaissance. The prices, in US dollars or (in three instances) British pounds (suggesting British ownership or location), range from \$500 (for a Sieneese head, presumably a sculpture), to \$350,000 (for a Goya painting). The works' genre does not seem to have played a big role either in Forbes' selections or Contini Bonacossi's pricing; for example, religious paintings by Titian are priced equally with a portrait by Dosso Dossi. The Venetian and Spanish schools have the most paintings at top prices; these were clearly areas of expertise for Contini Bonacossi.

In the first group, Forbes includes ten paintings belonging to five different schools. The most expensive work is a Velazquez for \$250,000 (or GBP50,000), and the cheaper one is Paolo Veronese *Saint Jerome* for \$30,000, bought probably by Contini Bonacossi from Von Hadeln and sold to Samuel Kress in 1954. (fig. 86) The other paintings are all identifiable, save three figures by Velazquez, "by the master I think, but should wait other opinions, all three are single figures".<sup>478</sup> The other works are Titian, *Flight into Egypt*, described as "rather fine," sold for \$150,000; Mantegna's *Deposition* (now at the Metropolitan Museum as Girolamo da Cremona, fig. 50); Raphael's *Small Children* (National Gallery of Art Washington); one El Greco, a small study of *Agony in the Garden* "that Arthur Sachs and the National Gallery have, a great beauty, it is hard to believe it a copy, in some ways I think it is better than Arthur Sachs' great picture"; and *Saint Jerome* by Veronese. Forbes continues:

[Saint Jerome by Veronese] Full of vitality that sticks in my mind more than any others. It happens to hit me very hard. He has several much bigger and presumably more important, one Rembrandt, Flora, and one Pisanello. To this, might be added three or four which he says are not for sale, but which he hopes would be for sale soon. And a picture by Piero della Francesca, that he has not bought yet, but he hopes to have it soon."<sup>479</sup>

Forbes here is referring probably to *Portrait of Sigismondo Malatesta*, (fig. 87) part of the Louvre's permanent collection since 1978, when it was acquired by the

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<sup>478</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to (presumably to Paul Sachs), 1928. HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes Papers (1867-2005), box 112, folder 2430.

<sup>479</sup>Letter from Edward Forbes to (presumably to Paul Sachs), 1928. HUAMA, Edward W. Forbes Papers (1867-2005), box 112, folder 2430.

museum from the family's estate. Because of the import license to Italy dated 4 September 1928, it is likely that the Louvre painting is the same one mentioned by Forbes.<sup>480</sup>

The second group includes eighteen paintings, with prices ranging from \$5,500 to \$350,000. Eight belong to the Venetian school. Among them, three Tintoretos were offered for \$35,000 each. They are *Leda and the Swan* (fig. 88) and *Head of a Woman*. Also included are Giovanni Bellini's *Toilet of Venus*, formerly property of Charles Fairfax Murray and bought from Agnew (fig. 35), for \$100,000; Titian's *The Farnese Head* for \$25,000; Sebastiano del Piombo's *Portrait of a Man with a Falcon* for \$50,000 (fig. 130); and Veronese *Venus and Satyr* for \$30,000, now at the Uffizi, once sold to Goering. Two works belong to the Florentine school: *Saint John* by Piero di Cosimo for \$17,000 (maybe fig. 115) and a painting by Albertinelli for \$20,000, which, according to Forbes, once belonged to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The museum then sold it to buy a work by Cosimo Tura. Three works belong to the Spanish school, included the pricey Velazquez, Goya's *Assumption* and two paintings by El Greco, a portrait of an unidentified saint (on sale for \$12,000) and *Saint Martin and the Beggar* (now in a private collection) for \$40,000. According to Forbes, the latter paintings of finer quality than the Widener version at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Among the Northern Italian school, there was a portrait by Dosso Dossi for \$170,000 and two versions of Saint Jerome, a large-scale one for \$7,000 and a small one for \$5,500 (the cheapest listed painting), by Moretto. The third group includes works in a diversity of mediums. While it contains seventy paintings and works on paper, it does not present any new pictorial schools or styles.

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<sup>480</sup>Another painting by Piero della Francesca will enter the Contini Bonacossi gallery probably during the same years. It is the *Madonna* now in the Alana collection in Delaware. An import license was not recorded for this panel, a fact that would suggest an Italian provenance for the work. The exhibition catalogue study on Piero della Francesca published the work as property of Giuseppe d'Ancona prior to Contini Bonacossi. There is no information regarding any direct transactions between Contini Bonacossi and the previous owner. Bertelli-Paolucci, 2007, 58, records the presence of the panel in the Contini Bonacossi gallery since 1930, without indicating any source. The same can be said for the other panel, *Madonna and Child*, Bertelli-Paolucci 2007, 5, indicate the presence of the panel in the Contini Bonacossi gallery since 1929, without reporting any source.

What emerges from the analysis of these primary sources is a very specific point of view of the pictorial history projected by the collection and its display, one influenced I believe by two contemporaneous art historians: Wilhelm von Bode and Adolfo Venturi, through his pupils Roberto Longhi and Giuseppe Fiocco. Bode was preferred over Berenson, not only because Berenson was a Duveen associate and therefore clearly a competitor, but also because of Bode's broader expertise in European art and its influence on the art market. Longhi and Fiocco, on the other hand, represented the Venturi School of up-and-coming Italian scholars. Therefore, painters from Ferrara were included in the Venetian school, as were painters from Brescia and Cremona. And for the same reason, works by Jacopino del Conte, Salviati, and Bugiardini, were placed beside works by Defendente Ferrari and Spanzotti.

Bode passed away in 1929, before Contini Bonacossi's exhibition of his Spanish artworks. His death also prevented him from consulting on the reinstallation of Contini Bonacossi's gallery in its new location in Florence. The majority of the paintings included in Bode's 1924 report were traded within a few years, a fact that reinforces the idea of Contini Bonacossi's gallery as an 'ephemeral museum' rather than a collector's attempt to build a lasting legacy in his home.<sup>481</sup> In the light of our analysis of these early primary sources, we can now better appreciate Leonetta Cecchi Pieraccini's comments from 23 May 1923 (reported in the first chapter).

Da tempo si parla a Roma, o meglio in Italia, della collezione d'arte dei conti Contini Bonacossi; I quali hanno radunato con mezzi di eccezionale potenza, una raccolta di strabilianti opere di tutte le epoche e di tutti i paesi. Stasera le sale della villa che le contengono sono state aperte ad un folto pubblico di invitati.<sup>482</sup>

*Contini Bonacossi's Florentine galleria: 1933-1955*

In Florence, Contini Bonacossi reached new heights. We can argue that Contini Bonacossi and his gallery in Villa Vittoria assumed a vital social role in Florence,

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<sup>481</sup>The term 'Ephemeral Museums' was created by Haskell (2000), in his analysis on the role of exhibitions.

<sup>482</sup>Cecchi Pieraccini, 1960, 142. Leonetta Cecchi Pieraccini was a painter and Emilio Cecchi's wife (1884-1966).

similarly to the Bagatti Valsecchi brothers in Milan a few decades earlier summarized by Rosanna Pavoni as follows:

nuovi principi per diritto di censo, di cultura, di capacità imprenditoriale, di opportunità politica, strategia del nuovo patriziato. I nuovi principi, tesori di antiche famiglie utilizzati modernamente, modello di buon gusto.<sup>483</sup>

When Contini Bonacossi moved to Florence (officially in 1933), he had been in business with Samuel Henry Kress for six years. He was an official member of the Fascist Party who had made various donations to the Italian government and, in Florence like Rome, he installed a gallery worthy of a museum. As already discussed in the first chapter, the Count chose as his residence and *casa-galleria* Villa Strozzi, a fairly new neoclassical building completed between 1886-1891, at the time located on the outskirts of the city center, with an illustrious provenance and appropriate for the display of his holdings and, in keeping with tradition, he renamed it Villa Vittoria in honor of his wife.<sup>484</sup>

The official showroom occupied two levels of the villa, the ground and first floor. The works were displayed with similar criteria as in the Roman villa, according to stylistic school. The rooms' comprehensive grandeur created an image of sophisticated, sober elegance for the villa's blend of showroom, office, museum, and home. The result was a luxuriously classic display (and, in the 1930s, synonymous with order and discipline) environment that contrasted with the 'hoarding' aesthetic of the previous century. The second floor, a true masterpiece of early twentieth-century Italian architecture, was devoted to the private apartments and to the display of works by contemporary artists (mostly Italian, such as Primo Conti, Felice Casorati, Romanelli, Giorgio Morandi, Arturo Martini, and Filippo De Pisis) who Contini Bonacossi patronized all his life. The villa and the artworks in the gallery shared the same fate. After the Count's death in 1955, they became part of the family estate. The building, emptied of its artistic treasures, was sold in 1964 to the Florentine Agency for Tourism. Converted into the city convention center, it is still

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<sup>483</sup>Pavoni, 1997, 170.

<sup>484</sup>The building is still in place and it was turned into Florence Convention Center in 1964, when the city acquired the villa from Contini Bonacossi's heirs. Colle-Lazzeri, 1995

in use today. The correlation between Contini Bonacossi's Florence showroom and the Italian literature on art of the 1930s is strong. In telling a pictorial history of Renaissance Italian art as a history of ever-greater realism in painting, Contini Bonacossi represented the intellectual taste of his time.<sup>485</sup> It appears as especially in line with Longhi's aesthetic orientation. Contini Bonacossi seemed to favor artists and works belonging to that 'anti-classical movement' which occurred between the end of the Quattrocento and the beginning of Cinquecento in Italy identified by Longhi.

The earliest primary sources for the Florence gallery are from the postwar years. For this section, I based my work on two unpublished primary sources: an inventory dated 1948 (as already mentioned, available at the Sovrintendenza in Florence) and Sandrino Contini Bonacossi's notes describing twelve gallery rooms in Villa Vittoria which are undated (Sandrino Contini Bonacossi's papers are still in private hands). The photographs of the villa are undated and have been published before.<sup>486</sup> However, clues regarding the sales and attribution of the works described allowed me to situate the photos after 1941 and before 1946. There are also other photographs of the villa in Florence not published previously showing a different arrangement, and because of the presence of certain works sold to Goering, they can be dated pre-1941. The 1948 list and Sandrino Contini Bonacossi's notes in some instances do match the photographs taken after 1941. When possible, the date range of the arrangement of the room is offered in each illustration caption.

In the following analysis, I have adopted the methodology that runs throughout this thesis: the artworks are grouped and attributed as they appear in the primary sources. This faithful approach allows us to elucidate the methods used by an art dealer in organizing his stock, which is one of the most interesting aspects of art market studies yet to be investigated. Contini Bonacossi's marketing strategy in Florence of presenting his merchandise geographically by school mixing the genres appears the

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<sup>485</sup>Barilli, 1991

<sup>486</sup>Colle- Lazzarei, 1995, 11-76.

same as in Rome, for these sources still seem to suggest the Bode method of a major work flanked by contextualizing pieces.

### *Ground Floor*

In the long gallery on the ground floor of Villa Vittoria, Contini Bonacossi displayed seventeen large-format paintings, predominantly of the Spanish school, with a few examples from the Venetian and Lombard schools. Included are two paintings by Zurbaran, *Saint Anthony the Abbot* (imported 8 August 1930, n. 152) (fig. 100) and *Saint Anne and the Virgin*; one by Ribera, *Portrait of a Knight of Santiago* (fig. 101);<sup>487</sup> Lucas the Elder's *The Infanta and Nana*;<sup>488</sup> Louis Tristan's *Holy Family* (fig. 102)<sup>489</sup>; one El Greco, *The Tears of Saint Peter* (fig. 103), *Saint Augustine* by Goya; and a portrait attributed to Del Mazo, *Portrait of Duke of Monterey* (location unknown); and three Murillos: *The Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 95),<sup>490</sup> in the Contini Bonacossi gallery since 26 May 1926; *Portrait of a Man* and *a Bodegone*, in the gallery since 23 October 1935; and *Madonna and Santa Rosa*, acquired 26 May 1926 (fig. 97). The Italian school is represented by *Deposition*, a painting by Andrea Solario; Tintoretto's *The Battle for Asola* (fig. 98) and two paintings by Morone, *the Annunciation and the Angel* (fig. 64).

### *El Greco Room*

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<sup>487</sup>This canvas was bought in New York from Jackson Higgs on 5 March 1927 and imported into Italy on 27 April 1927 n. 122). The purchase is mentioned in Vittoria Contini Bonacossi, 2007. 179: 'Oggi abbiamo comperato quel Ribera di cui vi parlai, è straordinario, il capolavoro dell'autore, credo l'unico ritratto, ed il più forte che esista al mondo, sono contentissima. Così arriveremo a casa con denari e con più pitture di prima... che bella cosa... vero'. The work remained Contini Bonacossi property until the Count's death. Acquired by Colnaghi London from the family estate, it was purchased by the Meadows Museum in Dallas in 1977.

<sup>488</sup>Temporary import license from 14 November 1928, n. 100.

<sup>489</sup>No information about Contini Bonacossi purchase is known at this date. The painting was not exhibited in the 1930 show of the Spanish painting of the Contini Bonacossi collection despite the high quality of the work. This might suggest that the work entered Contini Bonacossi's gallery at a later date. Sold by the family estate after the Count's death, it was acquired through the New York dealer Stanley Moss by the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 1974.

<sup>490</sup>The three paintings were all imported to Italy on 26 May 1926.



Here Contini Bonacossi displayed eight paintings by El Greco, eight by Velazquez, one Zurbaran, and one Herrera el Viejo. Most of these works entered his stock between 1917 and 1936 and were offered for sale in multiple instances; for example, two portraits of saints by Velazquez, part of his stock since 1925, were offered to Forbes in 1928. Most are also included on the 1948 list. Among the other six works attributed to Velazquez are a still life acquired 14 March 1925, a *Bearded Man*, *The Water Seller* (Uffizi Gallery, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 24 July 1932), and Dal Mazo *Don Carlos Prospero* (imported on 12 December 1936), and *Portrait of a Young Boy* (presumably fig 94). Among the eight attributed to El Greco are *Saint Martin and the Beggar*, offered to Forbes in 1928, *Saint Dominic* (in the collection since 27 July 1932, n. 6) (fig. 89); *Agony in the Garden*, offered to Forbes in 1928, (in the collection since 17 March 1925, n. 651); *Saint Jerome*, *Saint Philip*, and *the Annunciation* (since 9 July 1929, n. 5); *Portrait of Francisco Manusso Theotocupulos* (since 22 January 1925, n. 627, now The Norton Simon Foundation, F.1969.15.P); and *El Espolio*.

#### *Long Gallery on the First Floor*

In this long hallway, Contini Bonacossi displayed mostly large-format paintings from the Venetian school. These include two by Catena, *Supper in Emmaus* (now Uffizi Gallery, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 15) and *Adoration of the Shepherds* (now National Gallery of Art Washington, in the Contini Collection since 25 May 1934, n. 456); three paintings by Tintoretto, including *Venus and Adonis* and *Minerva and Arachne* (now Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, fig. 99), both imported in 17 November 1924; *Family Portrait* (now in private hands); and a *Moltiplicazione Pani e Pesci*; a *Holy Family* attributed to Correggio (now probably Tura, in private hands); *Portrait of Donna Violante* by Palma il Vecchio; *Portrait of a Woman* by Paris Bordon; *Madonna and Child* by Defendente Ferrari (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.8); *San Francesco Stigmat* (El Greco or Bassano); and *Homage to Titian*, attributed to Velazquez, later changed by Herman Voss to Mehus (private collection).

#### *Titian Room*

The Titian Room displayed eight paintings by its namesake: *Saint with a Book* (maybe now Moretto); *the Resurrection of Christ* (Uffizi Gallery); *The Last Supper* (since 1932, now Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino); *Farnese Head*; *Flight to Egypt*; *Andrea Doria*; *Saint Sebastian* (1925); a painting by Veronese *Evangelisti* and a Moroni; two Tintoretto including *Man with a fur* (now Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n 33) and *Man with a Statue* (since 1932).

### *Goya Room*

This room was so called because of its twelve paintings (eight portraits, two religious subjects and two genre paintings) attributed to Goya. Among them, only *Torero* has had its attribution confirmed (fig. 22). Despite the name, the room contains three masterpieces by Velazquez. The works are *Birth of the Virgin* (now at Norton Simon Museum), *The Education of the Virgin* (idem, Norton Simon Museum), and *Natura Morta e Cedri*. There is also a portrait attributed at the time to Lucas El Viejo, *Portrait of a Woman with Tiara*. The Goya portraits are *Cardinal Don Felice Prospero* (imported 29 August 1936), *Infanta Isabel* (imported 13 December 1924), *Princess Mary Antonia* (imported 29 August 1936), *Torero*, *Maja*, *Don Antonio Pascual*, and *Portrait of a Woman in Pink* (imported 4 April 1926). The religious subjects: *Saint Augustine* (imported 4 April 1930), and *The Meeting of Saint Elizabeth and Mary* (imported 12 December 1936). Of the genre paintings, *Five Heads* (imported 3 September 1935) is believed to be from Goya's estate Quinta del Sordo; it reappeared on the market in 2006 at Salander O'Reilly Gallery in New York. The other is *Children with Masks*. The room also featured the sculpture *San Lorenzo* by Bernini (Uffizi Gallery, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.36).

### *Sassetta Room*

This room was dedicated to eight artists. Representing Bernardino Zenale are two paintings, *A Saint and a Prelate* and *The Archangel Michael* (both Uffizi Gallery, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 9). By Ugolino Lorenzetti (Ugolino di Nerio) there is a triptych (Uffizi Gallery Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.4 ), and by Agnolo Gaddi *Madonna and Four Saint* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.29, fig. 106). By Gaddi's pupil Giovanni del Biondo, there is *Saint John the Baptist* (Uffizi, Contini

Bonacossi Collection, n. 27, fig. 106), and by Maestro d'Isacco of the Tuscan school (now Lippo Benivenni), *Madonna and two Bishops* (Uffizi Gallery, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 31) and the majestic altarpiece Bartolomeo Vivarini, *Polyptych with Saint James Major, Madonna and Child and Saints* (fig. 108). Probably due to export restrictions, seven of these works were never sold. Indeed, for seven of the eight, no import license can be found. This means that the seven works never officially crossed the Italian border (in or out), giving them an Italian provenance (a fact that would justify the enforcement of Italian cultural heritage laws). The only painting that was later sold is the polyptych by Vivarini. It was imported to Italy on 8 October 1930 and exported after the Count's death. Now at the Getty Museum of Art, the painting was sold by the family estate in the seventies. The lack of a systematic inventory prevents us from knowing when these works entered Contini Bonacossi's stock. Bad timing with the demands of the market could also explain why these works were not sold; their gold backgrounds went out of favor in the 1930s. A question that remains unanswered is why Contini Bonacossi displayed these works if they were not in high demand. He clearly thought that they deserved a place in his ephemeral 'museum'; we can speculate that this was due to their prominence in Italian cultural history.

### *Lombard Room*

The ten paintings of religious subjects mostly depict a human figure (a saint); they are by ten different artists chosen to represent the first decades of the Cinquecento in various parts of Northern Italy. As in the 1921 list, painters from Ferrara and Padova (which are outside of Lombardy) were included with the Lombard artists because of their shared stylistic approach, so important to the development of Northern Italian realism. From Milan, there is *San Sebastiano* by Luini (imported 9 July 1929), Boltraffio's *Portrait of Gerolamo Casio* (fig. 129), and an altarpiece by Bramantino known as the *Trivulzio Altarpiece* (fig. 149).<sup>491</sup> From Cremona, two paintings by Boccaccio, *Saint Matthew* and *Saint John the Evangelist* (imported 11 January 1927,

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<sup>491</sup>The Luini *San Sebastian* appeared at Sotheby's London *Old Masters Paintings Evening Sale* on 4 July 2007, lot. n. 48. According to the auction catalogue, Contini Bonacossi bought the painting in New York in 1929.

fig. 104). *Madonna and Child* by Foppa of Brescia represents the Southern provinces, Brescia being more influenced by Venice. Also displayed are Carlo Crivelli's *Saint Anthony from Padua* (now Chrysler Museum of Art) and *Saint Francis* by Francesco Francia (fig. 106). From Piedmont, (previously displayed with the Florentine works in the Roman villa) there is the *Adoration of the Magi* by Defendente Ferrari and the *Birth of the Virgin* by Gaudenzio Ferrari (figg, 76, 75) (previously believed to be a Spanzotti).

#### *Cimabue Room*

This room is dedicated to artists (from Tuscan, Venetian and Northern Italian schools) whose stylistic inventions created the *maniera moderna* as defined by Vasari. Most of the works are from the Tuscan school, with the exception of Giovanni da Milano's *Christ the Savior* (now Pinacoteca di Brera Museum). The oldest work is the Cimabue altarpiece *Madonna with Saint Dominic and Saint Francis* (imported 27 July 1932, fig. 105). For the Venetian school of the Trecento, Paolo Veneziano is represented by *The Birth of Saint Nicolas* from Bari and *The Miracle of Saint Nicholas* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 6,7, fig. 105). It also displays the only fresco traceable in the collection, Andrea del Castagno's *Affresco del Trebbio*, (fig 132) and *Madonna and Child* by Giovanni di Francesco (imported 21 September 1938 and now Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection. 5).

#### *Piero della Francesca Room*

The room contains three paintings, two by Piero della Francesca: *Madonna and Child* (Delaware Alana Collection) and the *Portrait of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta* (imported 4 September 1928, fig.87). The third is Paolo Uccello's *Saint Nun* (Uffizi Gallery). Also included are preparatory drawings by Raphael for one of the frescos of the Piccolomini Library. The *Meeting of Eleonora di Toledo with the Montefeltro* (now Pierpont Morgan Library) is displayed in the same room.

#### *Veronese Room*

Despite the name, only one painting by Veronese, *Portrait of the Count Giuseppe da Porto with his Son Adrian* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, fig. 26), is displayed here. The focus seemed to be more on Venetian painting in general rather than on one artist: there is a Tintoretto, *Saint John on Patmos*; three Savoldos, *The Magdalen* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 17.), *The Shepherd* (imported 27 April 1927, now Tosio Martinengo Brescia, fig 111), and *The Young Flute Player* (imported 3 December 1928, fig. 30); Morone's *Annunciation* (Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 11-12, fig. 64); *Madonna Piccinelli* by Lotto; and a work by Sebastiano del Piombo (imported 15 March 1923).

### *Bellini Room*

Among its fourteen works by various Venetian artists, the Bellini Room displays a preponderance of works by this eponymous Venetian master (fig. 114). The subjects are varied: six religious paintings and three of secular subjects, including a portrait, an allegory, and a mythological scene. Three paintings by Carpaccio include a portrait and a religious work; there is also a work by Cima da Conegliano and a biblical scene by Lotto. The nine paintings by Bellini cover his entire career, save the last few years. Among the Bellini works religious subjects include: *The Crucifixion* (fig. 84), *Saint Jerome* (fig. 147), and two *Madonna and Child*, one so-called in red (fig.83) and one in blue; and two paintings probably from a dissembled predella, *The Adoration of the Magi* (imported 29 September 1937) and *The Marriage of the Virgin* (last known location Stanley Moss, New York). Attributed to Carpaccio, there is *Savior with Four Apostles* (now in the Sorlini Collection), a small portrait by Carpaccio (now Giacometto Veneziano (imported 9 February 1935, fig.112), and a *Pietà*. Finally, the display includes Cima da Conegliano's *Saint Jerome* and Lotto's *Susanna and the Elders* (Uffizi Gallery) (fig. 148).

### *Florentine Room*

Eight of the eleven works in this room were portraits by Florentine artists of the Cinquecento. Three were attributed to Pontorno: *Portrait of a Boy* (imported 20 August 1936), *Self Portrait*, and *Portrait of a Seated Woman*. Of the other five, two are by Francesco Salviati, both male figures; one is by Bachiacca (imported 4 July

1928); and one by Andrea del Sarto, *Lucrezia del Fede*. The only works with religious subjects are *Holy Family* by Fra Bartolomeo (fig. 73) and *Madonna and Saint Anne* by Jacopino del Conte (fig.74).

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In sum, we can argue that the transition of Contini Bonacossi's gallery from one location to another (Rome-Florence) involved also a shift in the meaning of the display and choices of the pieces. In comparing the two showrooms, it is clear that in the one in Florence, the nationalist bent took over. European artists that were chosen in Rome, although selected in order to show their influence on or by Italian art, progressively disappeared when the *galleria* moved to Florence. Only the Spanish painters survived because of their links to, and their dependence on, Italian painting styles. Overall, in Florence, Contini Bonacossi's arrangements and choices of artworks lost the European breadth of the Roman showroom once praised by Bode. In the Tuscan residence, as well as the wares he was offering to Kress, the new choices expressed a nationalistic, Italocentric vision of art history.



## **Chapter IV: Alessandro Contini Bonacossi and Samuel Henry Kress: A Legacy at the Nexus of the Art Market and Art Philanthropy**

There are two types of collections: those like Widener, Gardner, Frick or Bache consisting of masterpieces only and those like the Johnson collection in Philadelphia constituting a historical series. The Kress collection combines both, satisfying students as well as amateurs. Few Italian painters between 1300 and 1600 are missing and the greatest are represented by highly characteristic examples in excellent condition.<sup>492</sup>

With these words, Berenson described the Samuel Henry Kress Collection that was assembled between 1924 and 1961 by the American magnate Samuel Henry Kress (1863-1955) (fig 116) and the Foundation that bears his name. Comprised of almost 3,000 artifacts (consisting of paintings, sculptures, decorative arts, antique books, drawings, antique fabrics, tapestries, antique frames, bronzes, medals and plaquettes mostly of Italian Renaissance), the creation of this collection and its disposition, through an articulate and unprecedented gift program, is still regarded as one of the most munificent episodes of art philanthropy in the United States.<sup>493</sup> As skillfully summarized by Bowron, the history of the formation of the Kress Collection is divided into three phases:

It appears that the collection was assembled in roughly three phases. From the early Twenties to the mid-Thirties, when Sam Kress himself was largely responsible for the acquisitions. From the mid to the late thirties until 1946, when the Samuel H. Kress Foundation began to play an increasingly greater role in acquisitions along with the staff of the newly founded National Gallery of Art (notably David Finley [1890-1977], John Walker [1906-1995]). From the late forties until around 1960, when Samuel Kress's brother Rush Kress and the staff of the Foundation (including Wilhelm Suida [1877-1959], Mario Modestini [1907-2006] and Guy Emerson [1886-1969], played

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<sup>492</sup>Frankfurter, 1944, 16.

<sup>493</sup>It is in the late Fifties, that the Foundation began consulting with museum directors in cities throughout the United States to discuss a 'gift' the Kress Foundation wanted to make to the museums, a gift of artworks. Through this program, known as the Great Kress Giveaway, Kress endowed his country with perhaps one of the largest collection of Italian art ever assembled by a single individual in modern times. This generous bequest of art, which mostly took place during the early 1950s and early 1960s, included donations of works of art to eighteen regional art galleries and twenty-three college and university art museums.



the dominant role in the acquisition, expansion and dispersal of the Kress collection".<sup>494</sup>

The 1,400 Kress paintings represent all the European schools but the British, with a vast majority of Italian Renaissance.<sup>495</sup> And, as demonstrated in the following sections, it is in large part through Contini Bonacossi that the Kress collection became one of the most important and comprehensive collections of Italian Renaissance art in the United States. This chapter presents for analysis the primary sources documenting Contini Bonacossi's sales of paintings to his most important client, the American collector-philanthropist Samuel Henry Kress (1863-1955) and the Foundation that bears his name (fig. 116). For almost thirty years (1927-1955), the commerce between the two was crucial to building the celebrated Kress Collection.<sup>496</sup> The primary goal of this chapter, however, is not to provide a history of the Kress Collection or its objects, nor is it to analyze the museum collections across America (more than eighty) that resulted from Kress's philanthropy. My aim here is to assess whether Kress's philanthropy impacted Contini Bonacossi's business, and therefore his legacy, and also how Contini Bonacossi influenced the formation of the Kress collection. Analysis of the sources describing this partnership, never considered before in this depth, will prove that it existed at the nexus of the art market and art philanthropy, and that, per volume, duration, and legacy of the deals involved, it was the most important aspect of Contini Bonacossi's business activities. The chapter is composed of two chronological sections based on unpublished primary sources (bills of sale, correspondence, packing lists, receipts, and oral-history records) covering 1927-1955. They are available for public consultation in

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<sup>494</sup>Bowron, 2015, 107-115.

<sup>495</sup>Almost 400 hundred of them are now part of the holdings of permanent collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC (almost 1,815 total Kress objects). The remaining 1,000 form the core of the collection of European art in 18 Regional Museums, 23 Study Collections (or Academic Museums), 3 special collections and 49 gift locations spread across 33 of 50 American states. See [www.kressfoundation.org](http://www.kressfoundation.org).

<sup>496</sup>For more information see the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation website [www.kressfoundation.org](http://www.kressfoundation.org). The most comprehensive sources for the study of the paintings in the Kress Collection are represented by the following catalogues: Fern R. Shapley, Fern Rusk, and *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Italian Schools*. 3 vols. London: Phaidon Press 1966-1973; Colin Eisler, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. European Paintings Excluding Italian*, London: Phaidon Press, 1977.

the archives of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation in New York.<sup>497</sup> The first section (1927-1936) covers the first ten years of their relationship, from the first commercial transaction in March 1927 until the dawn of World War II. During these years, the sources show an exclusive relationship in which Contini Bonacossi and Kress deal directly with each other. As stated on the Kress Foundation website, this collector–dealer relationship defined Kress’s collecting and the eventual shape of the Kress Collection: it was responsible for more than a third of the collection’s artworks. The second section covers 1937-55 and focuses on the purchases the Kress Foundation made from Contini Bonacossi with the goal of implementing the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington DC and to complete what came to be known as the Kress Giveaway.<sup>498</sup> According to the sources, Contini Bonacossi never sold anything directly to the National Gallery, but only through the mediation of the Kress Foundation, which was buying from Contini Bonacossi on the gallery’s behalf. The works selected by the museum officials and the circumstances under which this occurred will be explored in this second section.

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Because of the fundamental role played by Contini Bonacossi during Kress’s crucial initial years as an art buyer, the story of their relationship is inevitably the story of how Kress created his collection.<sup>499</sup> During his very early years as an art buyer, Kress was involved with the arts in a way typical of a man of his stature. He was a member or sat on the board of major cultural institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, contributing occasionally with gifts or loans of artworks selected

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<sup>497</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). As the primary sources proposed here will show, Contini Bonacossi’s seminal role in the formation of the Kress collection is proven by the survey of the sale records (88 bills of sale) documenting their transactions. It produced a business volume of roughly 1084 art objects being 983 European old master paintings.

<sup>498</sup>Other than for the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, evidence of a direct interaction between Contini Bonacossi and these institutions did not come up in the sources here considered. For this reason, in this scenario, the National Gallery can be considered an isolated case of a cultural institution that has been directly and systematically involved with the Italian dealer regarding the Kress gifts of artworks. On the “Kress Giveaway” *Life Magazine*, 1953; Emerson, 1961, 822-865.

<sup>499</sup>Bowron, 2015, 107-115.

from his growing personal collection. The bills of sale tell us that the collection was anything but static. In the 1920s, Kress purchased from Contini Bonacossi a mix of Italian paintings, sculpture, furniture, and decorative arts. However, as explored later, starting in the mid-1930s, his collecting took two directions: personal and institutional. This dichotomy can be seen in the sales from Contini Bonacossi. Indeed, from 1936, Contini Bonacossi started billing Samuel Kress and the Kress Foundation separately, as will be explained later in the chapter.

The lineaments of Kress's life are widely reported on in the literature. According to the entry on *Current Biography* from 1955, Kress was a "Mason, a Member of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Loyal Legion of the United States, a Republican and a Lutheran".<sup>500</sup> A department store magnate, at the age of 33 he opened the first of what in subsequent years would become the S. H. Kress & Co, a chain of 270 retail department stores spread across 36 states.<sup>501</sup> As we learn from Bernice Thomas's book, the S. H. Kress & Co. had an architectural division and from 1929 until 1944, which employed Edward Stibbert as chief architect and that Kress proved himself to be a patron, as commissions of sculptural work for his buildings to a number of artists could prove. Richard Longstreth, in his introduction to Thomas's book, *de facto* gives Kress a prominent role in the City Beautiful Movement that developed in the US at the turn of the century. He wrote: "Kress stores were more than pretty designs. They were commitments to a better everyday world, a sort of civic pride, and urban sophistication".<sup>502</sup> Although Kress never wrote about the

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<sup>500</sup>Current Biography. 1955.

<sup>501</sup>The Kress Foundation website provides details of his life under "Biographical Note. History of Samuel H. Kress and the Kress Foundation" in the Finding aid for the Samuel H. Kress Foundation Archives: "A self-made man of modest roots with German ancestor from Nuremberg, Samuel Kress was born during the middle of Civil War in 1863 in Cherryville, Pennsylvania. He self-taught to pass an examination to become a school teacher in the 1880s and with a 25c salary per hour saved enough money to open a general store in 1887 in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. A few years later, in Memphis, Tennessee in 1925 Samuel Kress purchased a duplex penthouse of 17 rooms and seven baths on Fifth Avenue, across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art". [http://www.kressfoundation.org/archive/finding\\_aid/default.htm#a2](http://www.kressfoundation.org/archive/finding_aid/default.htm#a2), (accessed 14 November 2017). Apparently, as will be further investigated later in the chapter, the purchase of this prestigious residence probably encouraged Kress to turn to the antique market to select wares prestigious enough to furnish and give adequate gravitas to his new mansion. Perry, 1994, 12-40.

<sup>502</sup>Thomas, 1997, 4.

beginnings of his passion for art, a few insights into his ideas and personality can be found in his papers.

Before moving on to the analysis of the Contini Bonacossi-Kress trade, we need to address, although briefly, a basic question: What were Kress's motivations for collecting? And therefore, what purposes was Contini Bonacossi trying to serve that could have informed his offers of works of art? As Behrman recalled in his book on Duveen, collectors were 'silent men'.<sup>503</sup> And as Bowron reminded us, the lack of documentation in this regard is one of the frustrations that afflict the historian of collecting. To try to answer these questions, it is essential to briefly position Kress in his historical context, to highlight what made him alike and what set him apart from other businessmen engaged in the cultural sector, be they collectors, donors or more broadly, cultural philanthropists. Although a generation younger than the collectors of the Gilded Age, Kress presented some of the same core features of his predecessors.

Oral histories from employees portray Kress as an extremely intelligent man who was very cautious in his business.<sup>504</sup> A generation younger than the collectors of the Gilded Age (like Frick, Gardner, or Ringling), Kress shared some of their core features, as described by David Alan Brown.<sup>505</sup> As many scholars have noted, what distinguishes Kress from these Gilded Age collectors is his lack of interest in creating a monument to himself through transforming his house into a private museum for his collection, preferring instead to establish public collections and institutions around his country through the dispersal of his collection. In my view, this difference is also evident in the purchases he made from Contini Bonacossi in the very early years. The lack of (what was considered at the time) "trophy art", that is, his lack of interest in chasing the most expensive masterpieces, and his preference

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<sup>503</sup>Behrman, 1953, 76.

<sup>504</sup>SHKFA, Series 6.0. Kress Stores, box 176.

<sup>505</sup>As David Alan Brown summarized "The collectors of the Gilded Age, typically after spectacularly successful business careers, turned to collecting late in life, devoting the vast resources they accumulated to the purchase of fine art, which they donated to the public. As astute businessmen, they often struck a hard bargain, but they did not buy art as an investment to be sold later. After the passage of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909, removing the import duty on older art, and restrictive ant smuggling legislation in Italy, most of the art came from Britain.", in Brown, 2015, 8-12.

for the masters of the Trecento and Quattrocento, show that his interest in collecting was based more on history than prestige. This attitude towards art, a symbol of wealth, and the act of collecting and donating, needs to be connected to Kress's deep Protestant faith (Lutheran) and his humble origins. The concept of American art philanthropy as a phenomenon rooted in religion (Puritanism, Calvinism) is a well explored subject. Peter Temin in his essay "An Economic History of American Art Museums" defined American collectors of art as "missionaries for artistic ideals [...] freighted by new socialist ideologies" and convinced that "art and education were part of the same civilizing campaign".<sup>506</sup> Peter William offers a cultural history linking wealth, status, and power to the aesthetic revolution that began during America's Gilded Age.<sup>507</sup>

Steffensen-Bruce argues that in the US, the urban reform movement was funded upon a religious ethos, mainly Christian and Protestant. She writes:

[...] The art museum began to form a curious relationship with the religious aspect of the urban reform movement. In a sense it came to be seen as an accessory of the religion [...]. The museum was seen as an appropriate place to transfer aesthetic feelings into religious ones. The idea was that art was spiritual and divinely inspired; hence the contemplation of art could improve one's spiritual self. This idea was constantly reinforced by the references to the Greek architecture of many museums through their appellation as "temples of art".<sup>508</sup>

Colin Eisler in his article "Gold-ground Art and the Cold War: Solving the Great Kress Mystery" goes a step further. In defining Kress as a "conservative revolutionary" Eisler adds a political layer to his philanthropic endeavors:

Samuel Kress's cultural vehicle to combat world Communism through the force of art still flourishes. His uses for the pictorial past, as with Carnegie's for the printed word, remain among the most impressive and original contributions ever made to American cultural solidarity and to individual exposure to new and challenging worlds in both word and image.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>506</sup>Temin, 1990, 181-182.

<sup>507</sup>William, 2006.

<sup>508</sup>Steffensen-Bruce, 1998, 130.

<sup>509</sup>Eisler, 2002, 73.

Evidence related to Kress's drive for Italian art and his philanthropic accomplishments as inspired by political motivation can not at the moment be put forward. If it were proven, this would emphasize Contini Bonacossi's extraordinary ability in seizing three birds with one stone: pleasing the American collector's aspirations, obtaining Mussolini's favors, and of course his own goal of running a profitable business.

*1927-36: Contini Bonacossi as personal dealer for Kress*

This section analyzes the first phase of a story, in two acts, of the thirty-year business relationship between Contini Bonacossi and Kress and his Foundation. It analyzes how Contini Bonacossi initiated Kress into the practice of art collecting, and how he came to be his exclusive supplier of artworks for ten years.<sup>510</sup> The primary sources documenting this first phase are particularly rich and varied, especially for the transactions that occurred during 1927-29. In this short time, almost 130 objects were traded, including European Old Masters paintings, Renaissance sculptures, maiolica vases, antique velvets, and furniture (cassoni, pedestals, tables, and stools and robbiane). The bills of sale provide details on what was sold, the conditions of the sale, and financial agreements (like loans, allowances, credit, and returns). As Perry mentioned, "the intensity and complexity of their dealings are visible in the invoices, lists, authentications and x-rays reports, notes of loans and payments, receipts".<sup>511</sup>

The timing of their business acquaintance, on both a historical and personal level, is interesting: it was at the verge of the worst economic disaster in American history, the Great Depression, and at the dawn of the Italian Fascist regime. At the time, Contini Bonacossi was a seasoned, 49 year-old private art dealer who was well connected socially and politically. He had already built a name for himself

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<sup>510</sup>As we learn from Contini Bonacossi's wife he then started to work on instilling in Kress the idea of purchasing art as not merely conspicuous consumption but as an ethical matter. Probably encouraging Kress in buying art as cultivation of the self as well as for the cultivation of the public through gifts to institutions, the dealer, to his own benefit, gave Kress a reason to believe in a higher value than business for profit: works of art in his potential role of patron for the benefit of public knowledge.

<sup>511</sup>Perry, in, Ishikawa *A Gift to America: Masterpieces of European Painting from the Samuel Henry Kress Collection* New York: Harry N. Abrahams, 1994.

internationally with a rich client portfolio that included well-established American collectors and European dealers. Kress, 64, was an American millionaire. Business savvy, he owned a chain of retail stores, and, most importantly in this context, he was a neophyte in art collecting.<sup>512</sup> These years were crucial for both men, representing the coronation of Contini Bonacossi as an *antiquario* (as described by Bargellini) and the emergence of Kress as a major art collector.<sup>513</sup> During these crucial initial years, Contini Bonacossi's relationship with Samuel Kress became exclusive.

A comparative analysis of the men's travel and immigration records with the bills of sale from their personal transactions (proposed here for the first time), sheds new light on how their business was conducted, adding another layer to this complex and fruitful relationship. Details of their respective travel accounts are given at the beginning of each section.<sup>514</sup> Indeed, the vast majority of the bills of sale for Samuel Kress's deals report the bulk of these transactions (up to 1939) were finalized during the summer months or early fall. With the exception of the very first ones, which took place in New York City, the vast majority were registered in Europe, (Rome until 1933, and then in Florence, when the Count moved there, but also Paris, London, and Munich). These facts pushed me to search in Kress's own travel records (available in the US National Archives [NARA]) for evidence of Kress being in Europe on the dates reported on the bills of sale for these transactions, as well as Contini Bonacossi's. As documented by the Immigration records from NARA, Contini Bonacossi sailed from Italy to New York almost every year between 1926 and 1955, usually in the winter or spring, to conduct business. As customary for

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<sup>512</sup>He made his very first purchase in 1924 from the German dealer Julius Böhler. This panel, bought as Previtalli, is now attributed to Pietro degli Ingannati and it is at the Allentown Art Museum (1960.07). For the next 3 years Kress did not make any other acquisitions. It was only in March 1927 that he started collecting old master paintings systematically, when he met Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi.

<sup>513</sup>Bargellini, 1981, 103.

<sup>514</sup>Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Record Group 36. National Archives at Washington, D.C. 'Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957'. Microfilm Publication T715, 8892 rolls. NAI: 300346; National Archives at Washington, D.C. (online database through [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com)) and New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Original data: Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897. Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls. NAI: 6256867.

wealthy Americans, Samuel Kress seemed to have enjoyed spending his summers in Europe, sailing virtually every year, from 1913 (the first trip documentable) until 1939 (date of the last documentable trip). A comparative analysis of these records with the bills of sale documenting the trade between them reveals a pattern that cannot be described as coincidental. For example, in 1928, the records show only one transaction, on 2 October, regarding the sale of 13 paintings from Contini Bonacossi to Kress. While no records confirm Contini Bonacossi's travel to New York during that year, we can document Kress's presence in Europe that summer. Although the complete dates of his European vacation are not consistently known, it is documented that Kress left New York for Southampton UK on 2 June and came back on 17 October, days after his purchases from Contini Bonacossi in Rome. Thanks to this new comparative analysis, we can reconstruct the timing of all 88 transactions between the two. Their transactions seem to gravitate around the travel schedule of both men, reinforcing the idea that they had a well thought out business plan, an idea also confirmed by the numerous indications in Vittoria Contini Bonacossi's diaries (in particular the manuscripts from the 1930s indicate Kress's presence in Europe during the summer and Contini Bonacossi in New York in the Spring).<sup>515</sup> A great number of transactions match their travel schedules, lending weight to the idea that Kress's purchases in the 1930s were part of a larger systematic plan that Contini Bonacossi, through his inexhaustible supply, helped execute, and in a way, tried to imitate:

15 Marzo 1927

Papà è andato dal Signor Kress, sempre convincendo il vecchio arcimilionario, che ora che ha tanto lavorato deve far conoscere il suo nome sotto l'aspetto di amatore d'arte, e lui incomincia a sentire questo desiderio, e già parla di regalare un quadro al Museo. Per questo qui sono straordinari...

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<sup>515</sup>These diaries have not been published and there were still in private hands when I was able to consult them. Here I report only few instances confirming Kress and Contini Bonacossi together in Europe. Vittoria wrote: 1932: Luglio a Roma e arrivato Kress; 21 Ottobre 1932: Nano parte con Kress per Chebourg; 22 Settembre 1934: Siamo andati a Mantova per l'inaugurazione dei lavori che ha fatto fare l'amico Kress per il Palazzo Ducale. Da Bologna si parte con Kress; 15 Giugno 1935 New York, ci imbarchiamo sul Rex alle 11 con noi il caro Kress e la signora Kilvert; 2 Agosto 1936: Parte Nano mio caro per Monaco di Baviera a far compagnia a Kress; 25 Settembre 1936: Nano con Kress e le due signore all'Hotel Excelsior [Florence]. Kress parte, si arriva a Parigi, i Volterra proseguono per Londra, noi si va all'Hotel Meurice, Nano resta con Kress al Louvre con il professor Meyer; 18 Ottobre 1936 Kress parte per l'America; 12 Ottobre 1937: Tutti [Kress and Contini Bonaocssi] all'Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli, per l'esposizione dei El Greco (dove abbiamo 6 quadri nostri).



cosa regalano al loro paese... è una cosa commovente. Così faremo noi al Castel S. Angelo... faremo una cosa da farci veramente onore ai Conti Contini rimarranno nella storia per secoli.<sup>516</sup>

1927

It was in March 1927 that Contini Bonacossi started selling art consistently to Kress. The circumstances in which Contini Bonacossi and Kress met are subject to speculation.<sup>517</sup> Some indications are given by Contini Bonacossi's wife in her American diaries. These fill the void of correspondence between the Italian dealer and his client, giving us behind-the-scenes access.

10 Febbraio 1927

Dunque è di ieri che vi dovevo parlare. La prima visita al mattino fu a casa della signora Kilvert che ha già comperato qualche mobile da noi, un tavolino (a pezzo fiorentino) ed un braciere di S. Lorenzo. Essa ci ha chiamati per dare un consiglio d'ammobiliamento di un appartamento che sta ammobiliando per un suo amico Sig. Kress. Così le abbiamo fatto spostare cassoni, candelabri, io ho levato tanti cianfrugli che erano di troppo su un caminetto. E mancano quadri, così speriamo di rimediare.<sup>518</sup>

This recollection is particularly important because it implies Kress's coming of age as an art buyer. For Contini Bonacossi, Kress represented a potential client. On 1 March 1927, his work paid off:

Papà ora non può andare solo, credo che sia un poco di nervosismo, date tutte questelotte. Malotte... cheriescono; oggi ha definitounaffare piacevoledelSig. Kress, così abbiamo l'onore di aver creato un collezionista, non ha che quadri nostri. Io spero che prenda altri due che ha in prova... e spero pure in altri affari.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>516</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 197.

<sup>517</sup>For example, Hoenigswald, 2006, 32. Hoenigswald suggested that Stephen Picchetto, a restorer at the Metropolitan Museum of art, introduced Kress to Contini Bonacossi.

<sup>518</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 180. Delora Kilvert, according to Perry the ex-wife of an American illustrator reportedly considered to be the lifetime girlfriend of Samuel Henry Kress, was helping Kress in furnishing his new residency, a duplex penthouse in a newly built prestigious building on Fifth Avenue across the street from the Metropolitan museum of Art that Samuel Henry Kress bought in 1925.

<sup>519</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 173.

Overall, 1927 proved to be a prolific year. Between March and November, Kress bought a total of eighty objects, the majority of which were paintings from the Italian Trecento.<sup>520</sup> These purchases reflected the trends of the time in the United States, as described by Lionello Venturi in his 1929 survey of Italian paintings located in the United States:

Sono andato in America per conoscere molte pitture Italiane. Opere mai pubblicate, opere pubblicate in cataloghi o riviste di difficile consultazione, opere male illustrate e male classificate, infine opere note a tutti e sopra tutti gli studiosi. Malgrado tutte le deviazioni e gli errori, la scelta di quelle pitture mi ha rivelato un gusto particolare che si distingue da quello europeo per maggiore adesione all'arte primitiva. Infatti le collezioni specializzate in pittura primitiva italiana sono parecchie negli Stati Uniti, mentre com'è noto sono rarissime in Europa. E anche nei musei la parte fatta dai primitivi è maggiore in America che in Europa.<sup>521</sup>

Among the seven sales receipts from 1927, two are crucial because they offer insight into the agreements that set the tone for the men's relationship. Attached to the first bill of sale (dated 1 March 1927) was a letter from the Saint Regis Hotel in New York:

Dear Mr. Kress,

I herewith beg to confirm the agreement made with Stephen Picchetto whereby the panel, representing the Virgin and the Child on a Gothic throne, this day purchased from me, will be cradled and put into good condition by him under my personal guaranty and at my expenses. It is further understood that Mr. Picchetto will from time to time give the picture whatever care it may need. If the work on the picture proves unsatisfactory, I will at any time exchange the above for any other work of art of equal value.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup>The sales occurred on 1 March; 6 April; 10 May; 14 October; 25 October; 25 October, 1 November. These sales included also one Giovanni Paolo Panini *Interior of the Pantheon*, (National Gallery of Art, 1939.1.24) one Moretto *Madonna and Child with Saints Stephen and Jerome* (Columbia Museum of Art 1954.33), Cima da Conegliano (now Giovanni Agostino da Lodi) *Saint Matthew the Evangelist*, El Paso Museum of Art 1961-6/16b. Two German works by Isenbrandt Miami 61.006.000 K6A-B) and two Dutch artists: (Hondecoeter, Hoestraten).

<sup>521</sup>Venturi, 1929, xvii.

<sup>522</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

More details regarding the conditions of sale are offered in an attachment to a bill from 6 April 1927:

It is understood that Mr. Kress may give away any of these pictures if he should so choose. If he should decide to sell any of them, he is to give Count Contini thirty days' notice, by cable, and Count Contini will then endeavor to dispose of them for what Mr. Kress paid for them or better, and if profit is realized, Mr. Kress and Count Contini to split it evenly. If Mr. Kress should dispose of any of these pictures at a profit, he is to first of all add 6% of interest on this investment and the resulting profit, if any, is to be split evenly between Count Contini and Mr. Kress. The present agreement to last for one year.<sup>523</sup>

The fact that this resolution appears to be a one-time agreement is evidence of Kress's progressive disinterest in reselling his artworks. And Kress's substantial loan of money to the Count became a regular feature of their financial arrangements throughout the 1930s, indicating the consolidation of their partnership, which went beyond the usual relationship between dealer and buyer.

5 Marzo 1927

Ancora a casa del Sig. Kress, cliente creato da papà, abbiamo portato altro primitivo, e si spera... ci siamo stati ore ed ore... ci vuole molta pazienza.[...] Sono stanchissima, veniamo ora da casa Kress, abbiamo rimesso (per la decima volta forse) a posto il salotto... due o più ore in piedi. Ci ha accompagnati a casa, ci ha regalato della frutta, stamamani ha mandato dei magnifici fiori. L'altro giorno mi ha mandato del vino Bordeaux, una di Champagne, due di whisky, finirò per doverlo vendere perché io non ne bevo di liquori. Speriamo in un altro affare, sarebbe una grande soddisfazione, perché è un cliente creato da noi e nuovo, non ha che quadri nostri.<sup>524</sup>

13 Marzo 1927

Ritornati a casa mi son dovuta vestire, per andare a prendere il buon Sig. Kress, e portarlo dai coniugi Guggenheim. Siamo ritornati ora, i Sig. Guggenheim hanno dato un'iniezione al Sig. Kress, parlando tanto delle nostre belle cose e della nostra serietà commerciale, così il nuovo collezionista si è sentito ancora più tranquillo.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>523</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111)

<sup>524</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 179.

<sup>525</sup>V. Contini Bonacossi, 2007, 193.

As indicated in the quote, Kress was not a consummate art collector (*cliente creato da papà*) when he met Contini Bonacossi. Because of his notoriously thrifty nature, which had made him rich, and because of the volume of his purchases, it is unlikely that Kress was buying art solely for personal consumption.<sup>526</sup> A high-status life might have appealed to him, and he could legitimize his wealth by adorning his newly acquired penthouse with sophisticated Old Masters paintings. But, in my opinion, it is not enough to explain the great volume, over the time span, of his purchases from Contini Bonacossi. From 1927 to 1939, the year of Kress's first majestic gift to the newly founded National Gallery of Art, the Count sold an estimated 859 objects (of which 670 were Old Masters paintings) personally to Kress steadily every year.<sup>527</sup> This means that of the roughly 400 objects forming the Kress donations to the National Gallery at the time of its opening on 17 March 1941, 340 of them were sold to Kress by Contini Bonacossi.<sup>528</sup> From a business point of view, the volume of objects that crossed the Atlantic is unsurprising. As mentioned, scholars agree that during the interwar years, the center of art commerce was North America. In 1929, Lionello Venturi reported:

D'altronde bisogna riflettere che il mercato mondiale ha lavorato negli ultimi trent'anni soprattutto per l'America, e che sono fruite in America tutte le scoperte di opera ignote.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>526</sup>SHKFA, Series 6.0 Kress Stores (1890-2005), Box174-177. *We remember Kress* is an oral history project organized by former Kress Stores employees "Kress had to be a very intelligent, extremely energetic, thrifty man to accomplish the tremendous success he enjoyed [...] The Kresses did not believe in borrowing and would not expand unless they had the capital to do so. Mr. Kress did not indulge in the expense of hiring a carriage but would walk to many of the suppliers in the town when on a buying trip and would write his orders on hotel stationery to save order forms.

<sup>527</sup>Although accurate, numbers should be read as an estimate, as many of the paintings are composed of multiple panels, such as triptychs, and therefore individually catalogued.

<sup>528</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111); Gallery Archives, National Gallery of Art, RG 7, Central Files, Kress Collection Gift, RG28, David Finley Paper, Correspondence Samuel H. Kress, RG 24 Curatorial Records, Kress Foundation Object Files (specifically Returned to Owner Files and Other Institutions); RG2 Director's Office Files. Also available in situ at the National Gallery of Art is the Kress Collection History and Conservation Database, an ongoing project.

<sup>529</sup>Venturi, 1929, xviii.

1928

1928 saw Contini Bonacossi sell thirteen paintings (eleven from Italian schools, one Spanish and one Dutch) to Kress on 2 and 3 October. According to the bills of sale, these transactions took place in Europe. The absence of immigration records documenting Contini Bonacossi's travel to New York in 1928 and the existence of travel records documenting Kress's trip to Europe that autumn supports this statement. Interestingly enough, one purchase (dated also 3 October 1928) of some sculptures was finalized in France presumably in Paris the same day Kress returned to New York (sailing from Cherbourg), as recorded on the sheet from Paris's Hotel Maurice.<sup>530</sup> Among these sales were two panels by Carpaccio, *Prudence* and *Temperance* (fig. 117) mentioned in Bode's survey of Contini Bonacossi's galleria in Rome, a painting by Goya *Maja with Two Toreros* (fig. 118).

At this early stage, it was already apparent that Contini Bonacossi was feeding Kress's philanthropic muse: building museum collections. Indeed, six of the artworks bought from Contini Bonacossi in 1927-28 ended up in public collections almost immediately. As documented in the Kress archives, Kress made single gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.<sup>531</sup> Because of his generosity, on 19 December 1928 the board of Metropolitan Museum elected Kress (by unanimous

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<sup>530</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>531</sup>Among the paintings, few, as indicated, are no longer are part of the museum permanent collection. The 1927-28 gifts list is as follows: *Madonna and Child* on panel by Guiduccio Palmerucci (now Harvard Art Museum, 1962.158); *Madonna and Child Enthroned* by Luca di Tomme (now Museo de Arte de Ponce, 64.0270); *Peacocks* by Melchior d' Hondcoeter (bought by Contini Bonacossi from Colnaghi, see chap. II; *Crucifix* at the time of the gift attributed to the School of Giotto and now considered by Master of the Orcagnese *Misericordia*. On the loan of the panel *Triumph of Death* (Denver Art Museum, 1961.169.1) at the time considered a work by Mantegna and now attributed to Girolamo da Cremona, was justified as follows 'the reason of the loan is that I have in my home four of the original six in the set, the sixth belonging to the Hamburg Museum Germany'. All the five panels mentioned, now part of the permanent collection at the Denver Art Museum were sold by Contini Bonacossi on 1 March 1927 together with an illustrious provenance and in 1939 were donated to the National Gallery of Art in 1939. Three of them (*Triumph of Divinity*, *Triumph of Time*, and *Triumph of Death*) came from the Alte Pinacotek in Munich, while two (*Triumph of Chastity* and *Triumph of Love*) from the collection of Lee of Fareham. Eventually deaccessioned in 1952, the complete series was donated to the Denver Art Museum. After 1935, the Kress Foundation continued Samuel Kress tradition to donate or to buy individual artworks on behalf of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as documented by, for example, the acquisition at the Walter Estate Auction at the American Art Association in 1936 of *The Meeting* by Pietro Longhi (36.16), and two paintings bought from Count Contini Bonacossi on 16 June 1937, a triptych by Donato de Bardi *Madonna* (37.163.4) and a painting by Antonio Vivarini, *Saint Peter Martyr hailing a carpenter*. (37.163.1-3).

vote) as benefactor of the museum and “directed that his name be enrolled upon the records and upon the tablet of benefactors in the main hall of the museum for perpetual remembrance.”<sup>532</sup>

1929

Aware of the potential benefits for his business, Contini Bonacossi kept Kress’s plan afloat and ensured that some of Kress’s generosity supported Italy in the conservation of its cultural heritage. Because of this, it is plausible that the Count suggested that Kress donate his money directly to Prime Minister Mussolini. Three checks from Kress, from 1929 (\$27,000), 1930 (\$10,500), and 1932 (\$1000), reached Mussolini’s desk.<sup>533</sup> In return, Kress was appointed by the King of Italy Victor Emanuel III as Grand Officer of the Italian Crown upon the proposal of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dino Grandi.

Among Mr. Kress’s munificent donations are substantial amounts he gave Benito Mussolini for the restoration of monuments at Crotona, Spoleto, Mantova and Ravenna.<sup>534</sup>

On 24 October 1929, Wall Street collapsed, beginning a crisis in the global economy. In the same year, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation was founded in New York City to “promote the moral, physical and mental well-being and progress of the human race.”<sup>535</sup> In 1929 primary sources list three transactions, two in May and one in October, documenting complex negotiations over at least thirty-nine paintings, mostly of the Italian school of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, but also of the German, French, and Dutch schools.<sup>536</sup> During this year, Contini Bonacossi spent

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<sup>532</sup>SHKFA, Series. 2.3. Special Collections, box 145.

<sup>533</sup>SHKFA, 5.0 Kress Family (1899-2003), box 174.

<sup>534</sup>SHKFA, Series 5. Kress Family (1899-2003), box 175.

<sup>535</sup>“The Samuel H. Kress Foundation Archive. Finding Aid. Biographical Note. History of Samuel H. Kress and the Kress Foundation”, [http://www.kressfoundation.org/archive/finding\\_aid/default.htm](http://www.kressfoundation.org/archive/finding_aid/default.htm). [Accessed 23 October 2017].

<sup>536</sup>Among them we can list: *Montagna Madonna and Child* from Zouche collection (National Gallery of Art, 1939.1.29, mentioned by Bode, see chapt III)., *Pinturicchio Madonna and Child* (North Carolina Museum of Art GL.60.17.35)., Cosimo Rosselli (now Biagio d’Antonio), *Madonna and Child* Allentown Art Museum , 1960.05), bought directly from the Marquis Niccolini as stated on the Bill of Sale.

four months in New York (from April to July) while Kress, as was his habit, spent the summer in Europe until 16 October.

A condition was imposed at the end of the bill dated 4 October 1929. The Count wrote:

It is understood that the goods shall be sent to your address in New York, fully insured free of any charge as soon as possible. I hereby acknowledge having received from you the full amount in three checks \$100,000 each. I guaranteed the above attribution and agree to take back any of the above objects and refund the money shall [the works] be proved not to be of the master and also provide statement about restoration that is of responsible experts and critics of art should it be declared that the above attributions are not correct.<sup>537</sup>

The negotiations regarding the purchases of 1929 were complex. For example, on 15 May 1929 Contini Bonacossi sold eighteen paintings, and, in 1933-34, Kress returned three of them. Among the paintings he returned were Boucher's *Amour Moissonneur*, and among those he kept, Lorenzo Lotto's *The Holy Family with a Donatrix as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, which in 1930 entered the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston as a Kress gift (fig. 36).<sup>538</sup>

### 1930-1931

It was in the 1930s that the Kress-Contini Bonacossi partnership blossomed. During this decade, Contini Bonacossi sold to Kress 759 objects, of which over 600 were paintings.<sup>539</sup> Between 1930 and 1931, Contini Bonacossi sold to Kress almost 100 paintings through seven documented transactions. Finalized between July and September in Rome, these transactions match Samuel Kress's travel schedule (the one in New York, dated 5 August 1930, matches Contini Bonacossi's presence there at the time, as documented by his immigration records).<sup>540</sup> These first bills of sale

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<sup>537</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>538</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>539</sup>National Gallery Archives (GA), *The Samuel Henry Kress Collection History and Conservation Database. In situ.*

<sup>540</sup>The transactions in 1930 took place on 15 July; 16 July; 5 August, 30 September. For the year 1931, 15 July, 16 July, 17 July, 13 September. In 1930, Kress left Europe from Cherbourg on 7

contain provenance information about the objects sold. This practice became less consistent as their relationship consolidated and full trust was established between the dealer and the collector, and as Contini Bonacossi's reputation for integrity (according to Gaskell "the dealer's most important single asset") had been proven in the eyes of the collector.<sup>541</sup> This progressive lack of documented transparency raised concerns when the idea of donating the Kress works to the National Gallery of Art began taking shape, as recorded in the numerous requests for provenance information in the correspondence between the Kress Foundation and the Italian dealer.<sup>542</sup> Offering detailed provenance information, especially illustrious ones, was a way for Contini Bonacossi to legitimize his reputation, to gain Kress's trust, to validate his wares, and to justify the price. A few examples clarify this. The source of purchase is mentioned for a painting by Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of Sir John Reade* (fig. 121); according to its bill of sale, the painting was bought directly from the Murray Collection and sold to Kress on 15 July 1931.<sup>543</sup> In other instances, it was indicated that a work came directly from an aristocratic family, enhancing its prestige and authenticity. This is the case with Tiepolo's *A Young Woman with a Parrot*, said to be bought directly from Countess Labia in Milan (fig. 122),<sup>544</sup> and with Piero

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October, arriving in New York on 13 October 1930. In 1931, Kress returned to New York on 22 September, sailing again from Cherbourg. The Contini Bonacossi sales to Kress in 1932 are as follows: 4 March, 13 June, 29 July, 1 November. Kress left for New York from France on 28 October. Contini Bonacossi left Italy for New York on 26 March. In 1933: Sales: 23-24-28 June; 30 June; 27 December. Kress returned to New York via France on 22 October 1933, while Contini Bonacossi was in New York between 1932-1933. In 1934: sales: 12 February, 13 July, 4 October, 20 October, And 27 December. Contini Bonacossi travelled to New York on 31 October, while Kress left France for New York on 31 October. In 1935, Contini Bonacossi travelled to New York on 4 April 1935.

<sup>541</sup>Gaskell, 2002, 153.

<sup>542</sup>In a later form 17 April 1947, Rush Kress wrote: 'Dear Count Contini, I wish you would be kind enough to furnish us with more complete and detailed information on all pictures and sculptures you sold to my brother. We are short on provenance and bibliography on a great many items which leave our records unsatisfactory. I am sure that more information has come to light in recent years [...]. Four of us, including Felix Wildenstein, worked at the National Gallery of Art last week in a complete check-up of each one of the 605 paintings and sculptures which are at the Gallery now, as one of our important objectives now in the employment of a capable man to complete the history records of brochure and other available data [...] I have found that particularly the large number of items which my brother had acquired from you lack of history. I am sure I will receive your complete cooperation'. SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Box - 110).

<sup>543</sup><http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.207.html#provenance>. The Murray provenance is not recorded on the museum website, but it is present on the bill of sale dated 15 July 1931 in the Kress Foundation Archives.

<sup>544</sup><http://www.kressfoundation.org/collection/ViewCollection.aspx?id=72&collectionID=28318>.



Longhi's *The Faint* (fig. 123), said to be bought directly from Prince Alberto Giovanelli of Venice by Contini Bonacossi and sold to Kress on 15 July 1931.<sup>545</sup> Sometimes a vague indication of the provenance, without specifying a direct purchase, was used to provide some allure, as in the case of these works from the Giustiniani Collection sold to Kress on 15 July 1930: *The Crucifixion* by Sano di Pietro, (National Gallery of Art, 1939.1.45); Andrea di Bartolo's *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* (National Gallery of Art NGA, 1939.1.41); Andrea di Bartolo's *The Nativity of the Virgin* (National Gallery of Art 1939.1.42); Andrea di Bartolo's *Joachim and Anna Giving Food to the Poor* (National Gallery of Art 1939.1.43), and Andréa di Bartolo's *Offerings to the Temple*, 1939.1.44); Vincenzo Catena's *Portrait of a Woman*, (National Gallery of Art 1939.1.46); and Giovanni Battista Piazzetta's *A Sleeping Shepherdess*,(National Gallery of Art 1939.1.40).

The dealer's name could also be instrumental, as it showed important connections to the market's most established businesses. For example, the Count indicated he bought Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's *Roman Matrons Making Offerings to Juno* (fig. 124) from Agnew's, which he sold to Kress on 17 July 1931. Sometimes it was enough for the Count to state that he had owned a painting for a long time; for example, he indicated that he had owned for 5 years an *Annunciation* by Ugolino (sold to Kress on 17 July 1931). As mentioned, financial records of Contini Bonacossi's activities do not seem to exist, probably lost during World War II. So unless proof of transactions can be found in other sources (like inventories of aristocratic collections mentioned in bills of sale, or other dealers' records), the information reported on Kress's receipts, although useful, can not be considered as irrefutable proof of Contini Bonacossi's legal title or full ownership. An interesting document, dated 13 June 1932, once again illustrates the complexity of their transactions. It summarizes the financial situation between Contini Bonacossi and his client for the years 1931-32. As occurred frequently, Kress loaned money to the dealer at an interest rate of 5 or 6 percent, depending on the sum of money and days borrowed, presumably for the purchase of artworks, facts that would seem to make

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[Access 26 November 2016].

<sup>545</sup><http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.204.html#provenance> [access 26 November 2016].

the Count Kress's agent. There is at least one example of the loan being linked to the purchase of a specific painting: *Venus and Cupid in a Landscape* (fig. 125) bought and sold by Contini Bonacossi to Kress on 1 November 1932 for which Kress lent the Italian dealer \$60,000 (out of a total cost of \$90,000). The loan apparently settled on 13 July 1934.<sup>546</sup> Paintings were not uncommonly also used as collateral, with Contini Bonacossi often having a painting held at a Barclays Bank branch in either New York, Rome, or London. Expenses related to the bank commission, safe custody, and even charges related to cable fees, restoration, and frames were carefully charged by Kress to the dealer. Import duties are absent; as per the 1909 Payne-Aldrich Tariff, all artwork could be imported to the United States free of charge.<sup>547</sup>

### 1932-1935

By 1932, Contini Bonacossi had sold to Samuel Kress almost 400 works of art, mostly, but not exclusively, Old Master paintings from Italian schools, an impressive sum since their business relationship started only five years before. In 1932 alone, Contini Bonacossi sold almost eighty paintings to the American collector and in 1935 alone, almost 90 paintings were sold, as were hundreds of *nielli* from the Trivulzio Collection.<sup>548</sup> Overall, during 1932-35, a total of almost 250 paintings were added to the Kress Collection through the acquisitions from Contini Bonacossi.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>546</sup><http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.283.html> [access 26 November 2016).

<sup>547</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Box - 110).

<sup>548</sup>Graham· Pollard, Luciano, Pollard, 2007.

<sup>549</sup>NGA- GA, *Kress Collection History and Conservation Database, in situ*. Also, the travel schedule both for Contini Bonacossi and Kress was frantic. Kress as usual sailed every summer returning to New York in late September or late October. (in 1933: Contini Bonacossi on the contrary, spent the spring and early summers in New York, usually arriving in early spring (March-April) or early summer (May-June). As for the Contini Bonacossi sales to Kress in 1932 they are as follows: 4 March, 13 June, 29 July, 1 November. In 1932, Contini Bonacossi left Italy for New York on 26 March arriving in NYC on 4 April. In 1933 the sales were as follows: 23-24-28 June; 30 June; 27 December. Contini Bonacossi arrived in New York in April 1933, while Kress returned to New York via France on 22 October 1933. In 1934: sales: 12 February, 13 July, 4 October, 20 October, And 27 December. Contini Bonacossi travelled to New York on 31 October, while Kress left France for New York on 31 October. In 1935, Contini Bonacossi travelled to New York on 11 April 1935. It was not possible to document a trip to Europe for Kress in 1935.

Although it might seem like a deviation from the goal of this chapter, reflecting on Kress's travelling exhibition which showed a selection of his personal collection around the United States between 1932-35 is crucial for our analysis of Contini Bonacossi's sales (fig. 120). Indeed, at this date, the Kress Collection was composed exclusively of paintings bought from the Italian dealer. Kress's travelling exhibition is fundamental to understanding the reasoning behind these new acquisitions and Contini Bonacossi's contribution to them. By the end of the tour, the Kress collection numbered around 550 objects (of which over 360 were paintings), which had been bought exclusively from Contini Bonacossi. As we learn from the objects' provenance, the Count seemed to have shopped largely in England. Indeed, 141 of the paintings sold between 1927 and 1935 have a UK provenance. This is not surprising because England was a major source of Italian paintings for the first wave of serious American collectors, just as it was for Kress a few decades later. As Brown wrote, the English countryside estates were filled with Old Masters – thanks not only to the dispersal of princely and aristocratic collections, but also to the tradition of the Grand Tour, through which English collectors brought art back from Europe as souvenirs. For example, Contini Bonacossi probably bought from the British politician and art collector Viscount Lee of Fareham. Although we lack documentary evidence of their transactions, it is documented that the two met and that Fareham visited Contini Bonacossi's Roman house.

Arthur has been very busy in his spare time exploring the arcana of the principal picture dealers of whom there are an unusually large number in Rome, and the chief of whom Count Contini is the secret source from which people like Duveen, Knoedler and Colnaghi obtain so many of their alleged finds. He lives in a spacious villa in the suburbs of Rome which Arthur has already visited several times and which he calls the robber's cave. [...]. Contini is very excited about our big Botticelli "Trinity" and hinted several times to Arthur he would like to buy it for GBP 50,000. Arthur wrote to him last night he would be prepared to consider GBP 60,000 of which he would accept GBP 10,000 in pictures from Contini's stock, but he does not take it very seriously and does not expect anything to come from it.<sup>550</sup>

At least seven paintings sold in 1927 and 1935 to Kress came from Lee's collection. In addition to buying works from aristocratic collections, the Count bought from Italian dealers. In at least one case, it is possible to document a direct interaction

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<sup>550</sup>Clark, 1974, 270.

between Contini Bonacossi and Ugo Bardini, son of the much more famous Stefano, who has been widely studied and from whom he inherited the family business.<sup>551</sup> Kress's selection of paintings for this travelling exhibition can be considered an anthology of Italian art. The works of art selected for the tour ranged from the shimmering iconic holiness of the Primitives, through the full developments of the Renaissance, to the decadent opulence of seventeenth-century Venice. This anthological character can be seen in the criteria for the paintings' installation at the various venues, where works were displayed according to their school, dimensions, and subjects (fig. 126). It is clear that Kress was not focused only on masterpieces, he was attempting to assemble as ample and comprehensive an anthology of Western art as resources and availability would allow. Although Kress preferred Renaissance works and those with gold backgrounds, in large part supplied by the Count, during the 1930s a remarkable seventeenth-century work could still occasionally catch his fancy. In 1935 he bought Tanzio da Varallo's *St. Sebastian* (fig. 127) and a still life attributed to Caravaggio (now attributed to Pensionante del Saraceni) (fig. 128). Both paintings entered the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Art as part of the first Kress gift in 1939. During the second half of the 19th century, and well into the 20th, Baroque Italian painting was not in high demand, and thousands of works were without attributions and awaiting modern study. Contini Bonacossi's early fascination with Baroque art is an important aspect of his professional life and showed great erudition and keen interest in eventual taste-making for his clients such as Kress. Italian (including Venetian works from the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Spanish 17th century art was closest to his heart—and was the basis of his collecting and dealing.

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<sup>551</sup>The Bardini Archive, tied to a clause in the testament, has not been completely processed so is currently not publicly available. Lynn Catterson has recently been able to start processing the papers and to study the archive in a systematic way. She has uncovered numerous records in the Bardini archive that refers to Contini Bonacossi's purchases, especially during the Thirties. Her findings and her study on the dealer is the subject of her research for an upcoming book. I express my gratitude to Dr. Catterson for sharing her knowledge with me.

*1936-1939: Contini Bonacossi and the Kress Foundation*

Until 1935, Kress bought personally, as is proved by the invoices directed to him by Contini Bonacossi. After this date, the Count started billing the Kress Foundation as well. As we learn in a report from 20 September 1948 on the Foundation's history, it was in 1936 that an executive committee was being authorized to use Foundation funds to purchase paintings and other art objects.<sup>552</sup> From the same report, we also learn that Kress continued to make substantial gifts to the Foundation. Marilyn Perry has suggested that the financial burden of Kress's 1932-35 travelling exhibition may have led to the decision to create a trust to take care of art purchases.<sup>553</sup> After 1935, Contini Bonacossi was no longer the exclusive supplier for Kress. This change seems to coincide with the turn of Kress's collecting from personal to institutional. After seven years of exclusivity, and the sale of almost 700 paintings, the Count faced fierce competition. Ever since Kress appeared on the international art scene as one of the most rich and powerful Old Masters collectordealershad wooed him with offers from their stocks. Though Kress occasionally bought from other dealers in the late 1930s, Contini Bonacossi's role was not at stake; Kress's efforts to buy artworks covering the entire development of Western art, from the early fourteenth century through the Renaissance, did not change. But although Kress, through Contini Bonacossi, had bought good paintings with illustrious provenances, the lack of 'trophy' artworks was evident to scholars and, particularly, to dealers, most notably Duveen. This 'deficiency' problem became especially urgent after Kress and his Foundation's engagement with the National Gallery of Art. To make his contribution complete, the scope of his purchases needed to be broadened.

Contini Bonacossi remained dominant in the purchasing campaign undertaken by the Kress Foundation, although no longer in an exclusive manner. Though some of the masterpieces in the Kress Collection bear a Duveen provenance, overall the Duveen Firm sold to Kress Foundation only around seventy pictures over twenty years, while between 1936 and 1939 Contini Bonacossi provided an additional 300 paintings.

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<sup>552</sup>SHKA, Series 4.0 Kress Foundation (1929-2015), Box 162.

<sup>553</sup>Perry, 1994, 10.

With these additions (84 in 1936, 69 in 1937, 57 in 1938, and 94 in 1939), the Kress Collection had almost 800 works with a Contini Bonacossi provenance.<sup>554</sup>

*1939-1955: Contini Bonacossi, Art Dealer for America*

Kress was persuaded to give his collection to the embryonic National Gallery of Art by the curator of Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art, Jeremiah O'Connor, who saw the collection at Kress's penthouse in 1938, before National Gallery Director David Finley.<sup>555</sup> In April 1938, Kress informed Finley that he had decided to give his collection to the National Gallery, saying "I will give it to you in time for the opening of the Gallery, and as I can obtain other works of art, I will exchange them for some of those I am giving you now".<sup>556</sup> In June 1939, Kress's gift of 375 paintings and 18 sculptures was announced, followed on 15 March 1941 (two days before the inauguration of the National Gallery of Art) by the announcement of an additional 43 paintings and 22 sculptures, all from the Italian schools, to be put on indefinite loan.<sup>557</sup> The Kress gifts almost tripled the size of the embryonic National Gallery's collection. By 1939, the year of the first Kress gift to the National Gallery,

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<sup>554</sup>For a complete list of works both from Duveen, see The Kress Collection Provenance Research Project, whose results are published on the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation Website. <http://www.kressfoundation.org/provenance>. [Accessed 23 October 2017]. These numbers should be considered as estimates, as they do not take into consideration cataloguing formats.

<sup>555</sup>David Finley Papers, Personal Correspondence, 1925-1976, Record Group 28A1, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives. "A month ago I had the pleasure of seeing your magnificent collection. [...] I assume this wonderful collection is not to be dispersed, and that the public is to become the beneficiary of your success in making it. We have had in this country a number of cases in which really important, but relatively small collections have been set up as separate institutions, and the good derived from them has been less than it might, and otherwise would, have been [...]. In the case of John G. Johnston, there was usually no one around but guards [...] and now contrary to Mr. Johnson's wishes, the collection has been moved to the Pennsylvania Museum. [...] The Gardner Museum has far fewer visitors that it should have [...] Already the attendance at the Frick Gallery is falling off, despite its favorable site, and the acclaim of its recent opening [...] I have noticed comparable situations to collections like Borghese, Corsini or Doria, the Wallace in London [...] In your own case, the vast sum which would have to go into the land, the building and the endowment for maintenance of a separate institution would, if your collection went into the National Gallery, be available for immediately straightening the collection itself. I am not connected with the National Gallery, and have no authority to speak for it; but I do know that in the National Gallery your treasure would be in the best company and would be given the best possible setting and I believe that there they would do the maximum of good.

<sup>556</sup>David Finley Papers, Personal Correspondence, 1925-1976, Record Group 28A1, GA, NGA.

<sup>557</sup>Langton Douglas, 1946, 81-87; Richter, 1941, 174-83.

Contini Bonacossi provided Samuel Kress with more than 850 art objects. More than 660 were Old Masters paintings. At this date, the Kress Collection comprised roughly 1000 objects, so it is clear that despite acquisitions made through other dealers (most notably Duveen), Contini Bonacossi was still by far Kress's most important source. Therefore, it is unsurprising that of the 393 works included in the 1939 Kress gift to the National Gallery of Art (375 paintings and 18 sculptures), almost 340 were purchased from Contini Bonacossi.<sup>558</sup>In describing the gift to the gallery's Board of Trustees, Kress wrote:

Over a period of many years, I have quietly acquired a collection of paintings and sculptures, particularly works of art representative of the Italian school, with the object of someday donating my collection to the public for exhibition and study in our country. Beside bringing from Europe as many as I could, I have made great efforts to keep in this country that would have otherwise very probably have been returned to Europe and have become permanently part of the great European galleries. I have done this in order that my Italian collection might include as many works as possible of the great Italian masters [...] Because the gallery and the works of art which will contain it will be for the benefit of all people of the United States and will be accessible to so many citizens of this and other countries visiting our nation's capital, it seems most suitable that others should contribute to the collection being formed here; and it is my wish, therefore, that the works of art that I have acquired should become part of the national gallery collection, and be exhibited in the gallery building now being erected in Washington. Realizing what it would mean to the Gallery at its opening, I decided some months ago that if the arrangements of the gifts were satisfactory, I would give up the pleasure of having possession of the collection in my home, and arrange to consummate the gift so that the rooms may be prepared for the placing of the objects of art for the opening of the Gallery.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>558</sup>Kress Database, GA-NGA in situ.

<sup>559</sup>Copy of this letter was sent by Samuel Kress to President Roosevelt on 1 July 1939, Records of the Office of Public Information, Press Releases, RG 14, GA-NGA. The series of Press Release is available in paper and online in Pdf format.

*1946-1950*

Analyzing the formation of the National Gallery's permanent collection, as well as the close association between the museum and the Kress Foundation, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, due to Contini Bonacossi's involvement in Kress's purchases of artworks for the institution, the Count's role in this history is properly the concern of this second section. According to John Walker, the first curator of the National Gallery of Art and Berenson's pupil, the Kress Foundation spent almost 20 million dollars to implement and enrich the National Gallery's permanent collection of European art.<sup>560</sup> How Contini Bonacossi took part in this operation, by providing artworks to the Kress Foundation, is the subject of this second section.

In 1944, Kress continued to enlarge upon his gifts to the newly opened National Gallery. To fill an important gap in the gallery's collection, he donated one of the finest groups of 18<sup>th</sup> century French paintings ever assembled (mainly bought from the dealer Wildenstein). There was an additional gift of 82 Italian paintings in 1946.<sup>561</sup> According to Walker, it was between 1946 and 1956 that the National Gallery and the Kress Collection, with the aim of refining the gallery's permanent collection, engaged in one of the greatest programs of purchases in the history of collecting.

Between 1946 and 1956, virtually every important painting and sculpture was offered to the Kress Foundation and in those two decades Rush Kress spent approximately \$25 million buying for the National Gallery of Art. The same paintings and sculptures would cost over \$100 million today. He also broadened the Kress acquisitions from an overwhelming concentration on Italian paintings and sculpture to include Flemish, Spanish, French, Dutch and German art.<sup>562</sup>

As was the case for many other European art dealers, the second world conflict severed Contini Bonacossi's ties to US collectors, stopping his business. Between

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<sup>560</sup>For a general history of the involvement of the Kress family with the National Gallery of Art : Finley, 1973; Walker, 1974.

<sup>561</sup>Walker, 1946; Duncan, 1995, 95-101.

<sup>562</sup>Walker, 1972, 73-84.



1942 and 1947, no transactions are recorded between Contini Bonacossi and Kress or his Foundation. It was only in 1946 that business communications resumed. With Samuel Kress bedridden by a stroke, his younger brother Rush took over the operation of the Foundation. On April 1946, Rush informed Contini Bonacossi of the reopening of the Kress Collection at the National Gallery after a forced closure due to the war:

It is of course a wonderful collection and I know you will feel proud of the paintings and sculptures that passed through your hands. I wish you could come and personally see it because I feel that you would be proud of what you have contributed towards it.<sup>563</sup>

Contini Bonacossi replied on 26 July with the same affection, complimenting Rush's efforts to implement the Kress Collection, to which he felt intimately bound. Those efforts, he claimed, made the National Gallery "the greatest museum in the world." He also strategically mentioned his close ties with Berenson and his pupil John Walker and tried to resume his business:

During the entire war period, I was necessarily compelled to reduce to a minimum my purchases. Nonetheless, I succeeded in collecting a few first-class pieces. There exist however, other things equally as important if not more so, which have been set aside at my disposal and which I would like to secure, because today, with the very favorable dollar exchange, they could be purchased on the most favorable terms, a condition from which my customers, in their turn, would benefit. Unfortunately my finances, after so many years of forced inactivity are not such that I can do what I wish at this time. Especially as I cannot touch a certain amount of lire which I have set aside to cope with the various taxations on personal wealth (capital levy) that will soon strike everybody. To make the mentioned purchases I should like to ask you whether you would grant me a loan of \$50.000,00 which exchanged into lire, would enable me to secure the best among the works already mentioned. I would undertake to bring to America the objects thus purchased giving you the right of first choice and in consideration of the financing you would grant me, make you the lowest possible prices. In the case that among the works that I submit to you should not find anything worthy of the National Gallery, I would bind myself to let you select something of equal value to the loan, from my private collection. I have hinted something of this idea of mine to Mr. Walker, who has examined my collection in detail and very carefully. He will undoubtedly tell you that in my collection there are many works well worthy of the National Gallery if your loan could be

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<sup>563</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi April 1946, SHKFA, Series 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

sufficiently guaranteed. The acceptance on your part of my proposal would enable me to resume my old activity which I greatly missed and I feel I can still be useful to the National Gallery in Washington. In any case please let me know how candidly you feel about this matter and rest assured that whatever your decision, it will have no influence on my feelings and affection which binds me to you. I would appreciate you would let me know as early as possible. It may be that you should await the return in America of Mr. Walker, to avoid indiscretion, it would be better not to cable. An airmail letter from you will be sufficient for your reply. Naturally all the items which I intend to offer you will be endorsed by Berenson's expertise.<sup>564</sup>

In November 1946, Rush promised the loan, but under the condition that Contini Bonacossi would send to America one painting (chosen by the Count from a list included in the letter) from his private collection as a collateral security for the repayment of the loan. The choice was among the following: *Triumph of the Arts* by Tiepolo (probably *The Triumph of Virtue and Nobility over Ignorance*, Norton Simon Foundation, F1972.26.1), *The Battle of Asola* by Tintoretto (fig.97), *Male Portrait* by Boltraffio (fig. 129), and *The man with a Falcon* by Sebastiano del Piombo (fig. 130).

But by 1947, apparently for financial reasons, Contini Bonacossi's position on the matter had changed. In his response letter from 5 April 1947, he explains why he can no longer afford to make the purchase he had promised and offered an alternative:

Unfortunately, the new law on capital levy weighs enormously on my patrimony as I shall have to pay the Italian State about one third of the real value of all my goods. Therefore I am compelled to give up at least for now, on the intentions to make those purchases mentioned in the proposal in my letter of 26 July 1946. On the contrary, I must put together an amount sufficient enough to pay at least the first installment. With this very aim in view, I have decided to dispose of certain items in my collection, which I had intended leaving to the city of Florence. Rather than see them in the hands of strangers, I would very much prefer they should go to enrich the Kress collection to which I feel closely bound. My collection is composed in the largest measure of free pictures and only a certain percentage of pictures that cannot be exported. If -- as I hope -- my proposition proves of interest to you-- I would advise you to kindly request Mr. Berenson to suggest to you those items which in his opinion are useful and worthy to figure in the Kress

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<sup>564</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Rush Kress 5 April 1947, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

collection. However, this should take place at the earliest possible moment before any changes or complications may arise.<sup>565</sup>

This offer came in handy for the Foundation: in 1947 Rush Kress, reiterating the Foundation's new acquisition policy stated his willingness to purchase paintings from Contini Bonacossi's permanent stock if they were of supreme quality and would represent an outstanding addition to the Kress Collection.<sup>566</sup> Following the Count's suggestion, Rush Kress contacted Berenson, who agreed to select paintings he considered worthy of the Gallery's collection. Berenson provided a list of fourteen paintings.<sup>567</sup> Among them, three were selected at this time, which, according to the correspondence, left Berenson disappointed. The Kress Foundation, in partnership with the National Gallery, selected Moroni's *Portrait of a Bearded Man* (fig. 131), and Veronese's *Full Length Portrait of the Gentleman with His Small Son* (fig. 26).

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<sup>565</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111). In the last sentence, Contini Bonacossi is referring to the new attitude of the Italian government toward granting export licenses for exporting cultural heritage. The friendly attitude shown by the Fascist government i had changed in 1939, when the Legge Bottai put in place new regulations regarding cultural heritage protection. The consequences of the new code had indeed already affected Contini Bonacossi business. In one transaction of 1939 Contini Bonacossi had sold to Kress, among other pictures, two side parts of an altarpiece by Zenale. The delivery of the painting was delayed and finally blocked in as 'the present government absolutely refuses to grant an export permit for these two pictures that were and are inventories. In a Memorandum to the lawyers for the Kress Foundation, Dr. Renzo Rava, attorney and representative of Contini Bonacossi in New York, cleared the Zenale affair. On 2 November 1949, Rava wrote: "sometimes before the war, Mr. Kress purchased from Count Contini Bonacossi two paintings by Zenale. The agreed price of \$7000 was paid by Mr. Kress to Count CB. However, the two paintings could not be exported to this country and for this reason never came into Mr. Samuel Kress's possession. When the Count came to New York City in May 1948 he sold to Mr. Rush Kress two paintings by Bassano and two paintings by Salvator Rosa (fig. 133-134). A price of \$12000 was agreed upon these paintings and since Count Contini Bonacossi owed to Mr. Samuel Kress \$7000 because of prewar transaction, it was further agreed that out of the purchase price of the four paintings, \$7000 would be used to extinguish Count Contini Bonacossi's indebtedness so that he would receive from Mr. Rush Kress only \$5000 in cash. This transaction is not related to the transaction which took place in July 1948 between Contini Bonacossi and the Foundation. The four paintings mentioned are not included, of course, in the list of the paintings delivered to the Kress Foundation in July 1948.

<sup>566</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, 6 September 1946, SHKFA, Series 1.7b Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales (box 110-111) ('we are not interested in quantity at this time, but in quality which will be comparable with the best in the National Gallery).

<sup>567</sup>Among the paintings selected by Berenson: Raphael, *Two female saints (Saint Catherine of Alexandria)* is now part of the permanent collection of Galleria Nazionale della Marche, Urbino, Italy) Raphael, *Infants at vintage* (now Anonymous, *Putti with a Wine Press*, NGA 1952.5.72) Lotto, *Susan and the Elders* (Uffizi Gallery) (fig. 148).

Rush Kress already knew of the prestige of Contini Bonacossi's *galleria*. He presented the Count with an additional list, found in his brother Samuel's notes, regarding works that would be desirable additions to the Kress Collection: Piero della Francesca's *Portrait of Malatesta* (fig. 87), Andrea del Castagno's *Affresco del Trebbio* (fig. 132), Giovanni Bellini's *Portrait of Jorg Fugger* (fig. 33), Andrea del Sarto *Eleonora di Toledo* (fig. 142) Rush also asked Berenson to provide a selection of the Count's Titians.

While Berenson, the Kress Foundation (with Wilhelm Suida now added as research curator), and the National Gallery curator (John Walker) were considering the paintings from the *galleria*, in February 1948 Contini Bonacossi was able to secure for sale, among other paintings, artworks from the Cook Collection (described by Elon Danziger as an encyclopedic collection formed by Sir Francis Cook (1817-1901) at Doughty House in Richmond and enhanced by Cook's grandson Herbert (1868-1939), eventually dispersed across the world due to financial distress caused by the Second World War) as well as other works, though his agent Volterra.<sup>568</sup> On 3 May 1948, for the first time since the war, Contini Bonacossi sailed on the *Mauritania* from Southampton, UK to America, bringing with him the wares he bought in London. Once in America, he began negotiating sales with Rush Kress and the Foundation he was now heading.<sup>569</sup> In preparation for his visit, Rush Kress reached out to the Count on 28 April 1948:

Dear Count Contini, I have been advised that you will arrive at the Plaza sometimes on Monday May 3<sup>rd</sup> [...]. I am making the following suggestions to Mr. Picchetto, which I hope you will meet with your engagements as I feel that it would be well worth while for you to make a complete check-up of my brother's collection at the National Gallery of Art in collaboration with the three trips which I made to Washington of 22 days of study of his art collection as it is recorded in my file and papers and which are fully

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<sup>568</sup>The purchase of the Cook paintings through Volterra is detailed in Chapter I. Danziger, 2004, 444-458.

<sup>569</sup>Records of the U.S. Customs Service. Record Group 36. Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897. Microfilm Publication M237, 675 rolls. NAI: 6256867. NARA. Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957. Microfilm Publication T715, 8892 rolls. NAI: 300346, NARA National Archives at Washington, D.C. Ancestry.com, New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 [database online].

explanatory. I have suggested that the four of you (Picchetto, Emerson, Vice President of the Foundation and Geiger, Samuel's secretary) leave on the Congressional Limited on Friday May the 7<sup>th</sup> for Washington, where Mr. Picchetto will make room reservations for your occupancy, so that the four of you can work at the National Gallery on Saturday and Sunday and return to NYC on Sunday afternoon. This will give you the knowledge of what we are working towards in consummating my brother's wishes and desires in having accomplished the most outstanding collection in the history of the world as we will discuss with you it will likely extend to other galleries to the Hawaiian Island. [...] As to the hanging and lighting which are referred to also the wall colors, we can describe this to you to better advantage when you see my brother's apartment at 1020 Fifth Avenue as it is now if you dock on time Monday, I think it would be best for you and me to become re-acquainted by ourselves through enjoying my brother's masterpieces as they now are in his apartment. If you go to Washington, Geiger will take with him the four portfolios containing the files of photographs of each gallery so that any further improvement can be recorded up-to-date as we have left sufficient space on each gallery sheet for this purpose.<sup>570</sup>

Contini Bonacossi visited the National Gallery with the Kress Foundation staff on 10 May 1948. Afterwards, upon Rush's suggestion, Contini Bonacossi displayed his thirty-two paintings on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the SH Kress & Co. store at 444 Fifth Avenue in New York City. These works were eventually sold in two separate transactions.

The first of these, on 15 June 1948, took place in New York, and included four paintings, which the Kress Foundation acquired from the Florentine dealer La Piccirella through Contini Bonacossi. The purchase from La Piccirella was strictly connected to the settlement of the Zenale affair. Indeed, while La Piccirella asked for \$12,000, the Foundation sent to Contini Bonacossi only \$5,000 (\$12,000 minus the \$7,000 Contini Bonacossi owed for missing the consignment of the Zenale). The paintings sold were Salvator Rosa's *Simon the Apostle* (fig 134) and *Saint Peter* (fig 133), as well as Jacopo Bassano's *The Scourging of Christ* (North Carolina Museum of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation GL.60.17.50) and *The Nativity* (Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation 61.47.10).

The Count's second big deal of the postwar years was finalized on 11 July 1948, when he accepted the Kress Foundation's offer of \$1,225,000 for 28 paintings, vetted

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<sup>570</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi 28 April 1948, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

by Berenson, all from the Italian Renaissance with one, a Cimabue (fig. 135) acquired under a special provision. It also included some important works from the Cook Collection acquired through Contini Bonacossi's agent Gualtiero Volterra, such as the Master of the Strauss Madonna's *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 136).<sup>571</sup>

On 7 June 1948, Rush wrote

We appreciate your interest and the many years of association with my brother and will make a permanent record of the long and valuable friendship and the tremendous importance of the work you have done in assisting him to get together the most outstanding collection of any one individual in the history of the world and I feel that you and your family will be much satisfied for all the future time in the results of that friendship.<sup>572</sup>

And again in 18 August 1948 Rush writes to Vittoria

It was a pleasure to meet to with your nano, for whom I gained a great respect for his astuteness, his honesty, integrity, and his deep consideration to making his part of over a quarter of a century's work in my brother's collection of lasting value to all posterity in America. We miss the Count here, and I do hope you keep behind him to complete what the three of us have started to do.<sup>573</sup>

On 12 December 1948, Contini Bonacossi informed the Foundation that a second shipment of eleven cases containing twenty-one paintings was to arrive on 28 December in New York via the *Vulcania*, to be delivered free of charge by Hudson Shipping at any location indicated by the Foundation. As was customary, Mr. Picchetto handled customs and the examination of the paintings, which took place in the presence of a government official. After this, the paintings could be released to the Foundation.

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<sup>571</sup>The paintings bought during this transaction are listed in Shapley, 1973, vol 3, 452-453, n. K1548 to K1575. These cumulative indexes report bibliographic references for each painting in each volume.

<sup>572</sup>Letter Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, 7 June 1948, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales, (box 110-111).

<sup>573</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Vittoria Contini Bonacossi 18 August 1948, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales, (box 110-111).

However, the events of 1949 changed the scenario. The first dramatic one took place in January: Picchetto suddenly died, leaving the Kress Foundation and the National Gallery without a crucial man, one who played a seminal role since the early years of the Kress Foundation. Rush Kress turned to Contini Bonacossi for advice on a replacement; the Count, who was aware of the irreparable loss, offered his unconditional help. By his own admission, Rush did not love art as much as his brother, so he depended on Picchetto's knowledge, experience, and honesty in the years since he assumed responsibility for his brother's Foundation. Rush's decision to turn to their longtime advisor Contini Bonacossi indicates the great respect and trust he felt for him. And as a dealer, the Count had a lot at stake, not only the pending sale of 21 paintings, but also the hope of many more to come considering the ambitious project the Foundation had recently undertaken of the creation of the Kress Regional Galleries.

On 23 January Contini Bonacossi wrote to Rush.

I was very moved that you turned to me in this sad situation. In reply to such a proof of your faith in me I can only repeat what I said in my cable, that in the shortest possible time I give you my solemn promise to help you to solve this problem as an even more than if it were my own. I do not agree with Berenson when he says the men in the Picchetto studio could carry on the work. One needs a real master of art for such a job. As I told you in my telegram, I have in mind a solution that might be ideal from every point of view.<sup>574</sup>

On 9 February 1949 Contini Bonacossi recommended Mario Modestini to be curator and conservator of the Kress Foundation. Modestini, from Rome, was a renowned restorer and the owner of one of the best commercial art galleries specializing in Baroque paintings.<sup>575</sup> He also oversaw the Contini Bonacossi *galleria*.<sup>576</sup> The Count recommended him as follows:

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<sup>574</sup>SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111)

<sup>575</sup>Dwyer Modestini, 2018.

<sup>576</sup>Dwyer Modestini- Modestini, 2006, 43-65.

Only one man in my opinion has my complete and unconditional trust; that is the man who has the keeping of my own collection and to whom I have always entrusted the most important works. Naturally, I have always been jealous of this man, as I consider him irreplaceable. Perhaps Berenson, whom I believe has always had a very high opinion of the way in which my pictures were kept, did not even think I would have been willing to suggest him. This man has the temperament of a master. His technical and artistic knowledge and his ability to inculcate into others love and care for their work make him unique. [...] I was so deeply moved that you sought my advice that my first impulse was to have taken a plane and to have put myself at your disposal. However, my wife's condition has been such that makes it impossible for me to leave Florence.<sup>577</sup>

Unable to leave, Contini Bonacossi sent on his behalf Gualtiero Volterra, the Maestro, "from whom I have no secrets, and I have known him for more than 20 years. You can make use of him whenever and wherever you think he might be useful". Although it is indisputable that both men were of high quality, Modestini had made especially impressive acquisitions of Baroque paintings, it cannot be denied that this turned the wind in the Count's favor. While Modestini was being considered by the Foundation's trustees, with the mediation of Volterra, the pending sale of 21 paintings was finalized on 10 March, when Contini Bonacossi accepted an offer of \$450,000. A large portion of the paintings belonged to the Baroque school, and 5 altarpieces that Contini Bonacossi had acquired from the Cook Collection through his loyal friend Volterra were also included. Among the paintings were two by Carli; two grisailles by Del Sarto; Bachiaccia's *Last Supper*; a work by Perin del Vaga; two by Carracci, *Toilet of Venus* and *Polyphemus and the Nymphs*; a Domenichino; a Cesare da Sesto; one painting at the time attributed to Rubens, now to Vassallo; one Velazquez; Rembrandt's *Sacrifice of Isacco*.<sup>578</sup> John Walker commented on the addition:

11 March 1949

Dear Mr. Kress,

The Italian paintings from the Cook collection probably represent the last opportunity to gather together an important group of large altarpieces I think

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<sup>577</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, 9 February 1949, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>578</sup>The paintings bought during this transaction are listed in the cumulative indexes in Shapley, 1973, III, 453, n. K1616 to K1636. These indexes report the exact bibliographic reference for the entry in each of the Shapley's or Eisler's volume.



they represent an excellent acquisition. I am delighted to have met professor Modestini. It had been a long time since I have found myself drawn to a person, and talking to him about the Cook pictures I recognised at once he knew the job thoroughly and he is the person on whom you can rely.<sup>579</sup>

In the next few months, Rush talked to Contini Bonacossi of his intention to push on with the acquisition policy until at least that fall. The Italian dealer agreed, and he informed Kress that Volterra had been sent on a trip to Europe to look for artworks in private hands that could be purchased to support the Foundation's mission. He also updated Kress on the status of two Pisano sculptures that the Italian government would not allow to be exported. In doing so, Contini Bonacossi tested the waters to see if the National Gallery would be interested in a "magnificent marble portrait by Lorenzo Bernini."<sup>580</sup> Contini Bonacossi knew that the Kress Foundation, especially when directed by Wilhelm Suida, planned to buy more Italian Baroque paintings, still underrepresented in the Kress Collection. This plan is covered in an essay by Bowron on the collection's bucolic pictures; it is still the only extensive study devoted to the matter.

More Baroque works were acquired during the 1940s, when the taste for Baroque expanded throughout the United States, and museums began filling gaps in their holdings. This change can also be seen in the Kress Collection when Wilhelm Suida was appointed its director (1947) and Mario Modestini replaced Stephen Picchetto as chief conservator of the Kress Foundation (1949). Their love for Baroque Italian paintings can be clearly seen in the acquisitions of the late 1940s.

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<sup>579</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Rush Kress on 11 March 1949, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>580</sup>In a reply letter from Rush, we know about the Bernini marble. Apparently, the sculpture, a portrait of Francesco Barberini, had already been offered to John Walker for \$14,000. John Walker was not an expert on Baroque, and as could be expected from a Berenson pupil, did not highly regard Baroque art.

By the spring of 1950, the Kress Regional Gallery Project was well underway, and the mission of the Foundation was defined: “a large Kress collection of the National Gallery and smaller ones for eighteen regional museums, the residue destined for churches and university study collections.”<sup>581</sup> As reported by Chiyo Ishikawa, “the goal was to make the Kress collection unique in history, a national collection and not a Washington collection with eighteen or twenty subsidiary collections of inferior quality.”<sup>582</sup> The National Gallery encouraged this high standard, and in those years the art market was favorable to it. With the twin goals of implementing the Kress Collection at the National Gallery and the Kress Regional Program, the 1950s were intense years filled with purchases for the Foundation. Buying works for the National Gallery was very expensive for the Foundation, and during these years we see the highest prices the Kresses ever paid for artworks. Such was the cost of transforming this newly born institution into a world-class museum. In a sort of gold rush, every major art dealer was at this point involved in the trading. Although Contini Bonacossi’s supply of art works to the Kress was reduced, he did not lose his seminal role as advisor to the Kress Foundation, as confirmed by his frequent correspondence with Rush Kress.<sup>583</sup> In this period, Contini Bonacossi finalized two deals, one in 1950 for the sale of 125 paintings, and one in 1954 of 16 paintings. On 8 February 1950, he wrote to Rush Kress:

Since my return from the US, I have been working systematically and continuously with the only view in my mind of the completion of the Kress Gallery at the National Gallery of Art. The results have exceeded all my expectations and I think it will surprise you by showing you a group of works which represents the best that could be still found in the field of Italian Art. Practically, it will fill every still existing gap in the Kress collection, and should make of it, not only the greatest collection in the world, but the most complete ever assembled in history. Of course every work will be submitted to Berenson. I want to state that all the works have been purchased by me at my entire risk and without any order or obligation on your part. Modestini

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<sup>581</sup>Dwyer Modestini and Modestini, 2006, 49.

<sup>582</sup>Ishikawa, 1994, 13-35.

<sup>583</sup>According to the data from the Kress Collection History and Conservation database in the Archives of the National Gallery of Art, between 1927-42, Contini Bonacossi was responsible for 90% of the sales to Kress, while in the following decades, it went down to 16%.

had worked strenuously night and day, but I do not want to delay his departure for New York. I should like to thank you and the Trustees deeply for my nomination as Honorary Trustee, and I want to assure you that I will contribute in every way I can to collaborate in order that the foundation can fulfill all that which we can expect.<sup>584</sup>

According to the bills of sales, on 1 July 1950, Contini Bonacossi accepted the offer of \$4,000,000 from the Foundation for the purchase of 125 paintings.<sup>585</sup> An additional \$156,500 was included for the 488 frames, as well as for the care, rehanging, and new installations of the Kress Collection at the National Gallery and around the US. As usual, the paintings were to be delivered to a Manhattan storage facility. Kress suggested that the Count arrange the paintings chronologically and by schools so the gallery's director (Finley) and its curator (Walker) could analyze the paintings in groups. This outstanding ensemble could have been a collection in its own right for its variety and completeness of artists, centuries, styles, and subject represented. The list of works in the Foundation's archives is annotated with suggestions as to which collection would be best served by each painting. By examining these selections, we can better understand Contini Bonacossi's contribution to the process of building the Kress Collection at the National Gallery and the regional galleries, as well as better understanding the process itself. Likely with the assistance of Gualtiero Volterra and his nephew Sandrino, Contini Bonacossi compiled an impressive survey of the objects he described with insightful notes. Each regional school was represented by its best example (figg. 138; 139, 140, 141). The Tuscan schools from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century are particularly well represented. From the 11th century (around 1220), it is worth mentioning a *Madonna and Child* by a Pre-Berlinghiero artist, as a work that "would be the oldest Italian painting in the National' (Adrobyzantine Master Adriatic (fig. 137).

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<sup>584</sup>Letter from Alessandro Contini Bonacossi to Rush Kress 8 February 1950, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales (box 110-11).

<sup>585</sup>The paintings bought during this transaction are listed in the cumulative indexes in Shapley, 1973, III,453, n. K1715 to K1828.

Because of the Kress Regional Galleries project, the National Gallery of Art's right to choose first was handled very discreetly; this reappears like a *leitmotiv* in the correspondence between the Foundation and the Count. Numerous important Gallery events were taking place at the time. In addition to the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art and the regional galleries project, the gallery's tenth anniversary was upcoming, so a loan of works was considered, adding to a very busy and complicated schedule. For this reason, no changes to the 35 Kress rooms at the National Gallery were envisioned until 1952, by which time the collection had permanent occupancy, and an exhibition devoted to the Kress Collection could be held. Most of the work at this point (for all involved) was devoted to reframing and restoring the paintings, first in storage, then at the National Gallery, preparing for this exhibition. 50 of the 112 paintings displayed came from Contini Bonacossi.<sup>586</sup>

In 1952, negotiations resumed to acquire paintings for the Kress Foundation from Contini Bonacossi's *galleria* in Florence. On 26 August 1952, the dealer sent a list of available wares, stating that he would obtain an export license as soon as possible. The payment agreement did not change, with fees and export duties deducted from "the amount due to me." The 25 paintings included one gift, Butinone's *Crucifixion*, and 24 works. Among them was an *Altarpiece* by Andrea Solario; Savoldo, *The Prophet Elijah*; (fig 144) Tintoretto, *The Conversion of Saint Paul* and *Portrait of a Lady with a White Collar*; and Titian, *Saint John the Evangelist*, Bronzino *Eleonora di Toledo* (fig.142) Veronese *Saint Lucy and a Donor* (fig. 143) and *Saint Jerome* (fig. 86). Negotiations, however, proved to be long as John Walker and his mentor Bernard Berenson started playing active roles in selecting the works. This sale was further complicated by a provision included in the sale agreement, resolved only after the Count's death, related to the item n. 17 that will be discussed further below. Contini Bonacossi had a friendly relationship with Berenson, but from the correspondence we can see that Walker's interference in his negotiations with Rush Kress was not welcome. After Walker and Berenson visited Contini Bonacossi's gallery with the goal of vetting the paintings being considered for purchase, Berenson produced a memo rating the paintings according to their value to the

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<sup>586</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi 7 February 1952, SHKFA, Series 1.7b. Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales (box 110-111).

National Gallery. Three categories are proposed: paintings of National Gallery quality, those on the border or just below National Gallery quality, and those below National Gallery quality. Walker also offered his thoughts. Six paintings were placed in the first group: the Duccio (given by Berenson to Ugolino); Titian's *Ceiling* (fig 145), particularly desired by Walker as "there were no ceilings of particular interest in the US other than the small one the Foundation bought for the Seattle museum"; and Tintoretto's *Conversion of Saint Paul*, considered by Berenson to be one of the artist's most important works. Tintoretto's *Portrait of a Lady*, although considered by Berenson a masterwork, was not thought by Walker to be a necessary addition to the corpus of the artist the National Gallery already had. Of the two Veronese, Berenson preferred *Saint Jerome* (fig.85), while Walker preferred *Saint Lucy* (fig 143). Among the second group, Berenson found the Solario 'important but boring', while the Stratonice master was 'not interesting but in exceptional condition'. The Savoldo, presented to Berenson years before by Loeser and refused because it was 'too large for my house', was considered inferior to *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 140), by the same artist and already in the Kress collection. Of the paintings considered of too low quality by Berenson, Walker advocated saving a portrait by Lotto and Bronzino's *Eleonora di Toledo*, (fig.142) an opinion shared by Modestini.<sup>587</sup> Still, a resolution of this agreement was not in sight. It was only on 7 June 1954 that a compromise was reached when the Foundation board offered Contini Bonacossi \$2,000,000.00 for 17 paintings, 16 among the 24 selected by the Count in 1952 plus item n. 17 and its provision, which read:

17. Painting or paintings from your own collection of a value not less than \$100,000.00 to be selected as hereafter provided. Item 17 is any one or more of the free (which can be exported) paintings in your collection, which in the opinion of Mrs Walker and Professor Modestini, and worthy in their opinion to be in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>587</sup>The paintings bought during this transaction are listed in the cumulative indexes by Shapley, 1973,III, 453. K2061-K2076. These indexes report the exact bibliographic reference for the entry in each of the Shapley or Eisler volumes.

<sup>588</sup>Bill of Sale 7 June 1954, SHKFA, Series 1.7b Dealers Correspondence and Bills Of Sales, (box 110-111).

The selection for item n. 17 was made by Walker and Modestini; all paintings were valued at over \$100,000 and deemed worthy of the National Gallery's permanent collection. During his last trip to the National Gallery (and the US) in June 1954, Contini Bonacossi found the proposal in compliance with the agreement made in June 1952. But still item 17 presented a problem as the genuineness of the Count's claims of non-exportability for the works selected was of great concern to the Foundation staff. John Walker turned to Berenson for advice, who stated, "I refused to have anything to do with the selection of pictures at Contini's. He pretends he can't get the permit to export it [...] He could export Brunelleschi's cupola."<sup>589</sup> The archival documentation of this last transaction (Contini Bonacossi died a year later) is fascinating. The Foundation staff, in collaboration with the National Gallery's curators, compiled condition reports and multiple expert opinions regarding the historical value of the paintings selected.

On 16 July 1954, Modestini and Walker presented the selection of the Count's paintings to be placed permanently in the Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art:

Sassetta, *Madonna of the Snow* (\$300,000) (fig.146); Castagno, *Affresco di Casa Pazzi* (\$200,000)(fig.132); Tintoretto, *Battle of Asola* (200,000) (fig.98); Zurbaran *Still Life* (valued at \$100,000 by Modestini, at \$50,000 by Walker); Bellini, *Gold Monochrome Allegory* (\$100,000) (fig. 56); Bellini, *Saint Jerome* (\$150,000);(fig 147) Lotto, *Susanna and the Elders* (\$100,000) (fig. 148); Catena, *Adoration of the Shepherd* (\$50,000); Murillo, *Adoration* (\$50,000) (fig. 95); Carrand Master *Madonna and Child* (\$50,000.00); Tiepolo, *Ceiling* (\$100,000); Veronese, *Portrait of a Man with a Child* (\$100,000) (fig. 26); Bellini, *Portrait of Jorge Fugger* (\$50,000) (fig. 33); and Bramantino, *Holy Family* (\$50,000) (fig. 149).<sup>590</sup>

Contini Bonacossi, however, was irreconcilable. John Walker turned to Rush Kress, who promptly wrote, in a diplomatic manner, to his longtime advisor on 3 August 1954.

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<sup>589</sup>Letter from John Walker to Guy Emerson from 10 November 1954. Records of the Office of the Assistant or Deputy Director, Donor Collections RG.3, Box 2 GA-NGA.

<sup>590</sup>Memorandum by Modestini and Walker dates 16 July 1954, without valuations can be found in SHKFA, Series 1.7b, Dealers Correspondence and Bills of Sales (box 110-11); while another one from the same authors with valuations can be found in Records of the Office of the Assistant or Deputy Director, Donor Collections RG. 3, Box 2 GA-NGA.

John Walker states that you are disinclined to let us have any of the pictures that they selected and had offered some unhung paintings, none of which appealed to them as satisfactory. I can only say to you in the same spirit of frankness which we have always used with one another that I was never more disappointed and astonished at any development in my business life of over 40 years. I could not believe it. I think you will agree that you and I spent more hours together than anyone else negotiating this recent sale. I feel that the paintings are worth what we had paid for them. On the other side, I think it can be said that you received a full, round, and rich price. As we sat at the meeting with the Trustees last June it was your own suggestion, voluntarily made, that the contract be concluded by the addition of a painting to be selected from your own collection (which definitely applied to your collection as hanging and open to the public in Florence). Based on your suggestion an understanding was drawn up and approved by you and your counsel that Modestini and Walker would go to Florence and select the works worth of \$100,000.00 and suitable for the National Gallery of Art. All of this was crystal clear.[...] I now appeal to you to select one or more of these paintings immediately to fulfill the contract and take the necessary steps to facilitate the obtaining of the necessary export permits.<sup>591</sup>

No paintings were added to the purchase of 30 June 1954, with Contini Bonacossi staying faithful to the statement he made to John Walker: “the Count would rather cancel or refund the \$100,000 than allow any of his important pictures to leave Italy.” We do not have any evidence of this refund, but we do have evidence that a sum of at least \$1,500,000.00 was paid to the Count by 1 October 1955. The transaction was resolved after the Count’s death. In 1969, some of the same paintings were selected, in accordance with the heirs, by a Commission of art historians (including Roberto Longhi and Giuseppe Fiocco) and government officials appointed by the Italian Government as being part of the gift for the Contini Bonacossi Collection at the Galleria degli Uffizi (for example Sassetta, Veronese and Bramantino), while some were sold years later by the family estate and never entered the Kress Collection nor the National Gallery’s permanent collection.<sup>592</sup>

Samuel Kress and his longtime advisor Count Contini Bonacossi died in 1955, one month apart. They did not see the conclusion of their lifetime endeavor. However, the Kress Collection continued to grow for the next several years, to nearly 3,100

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<sup>591</sup>Letter from Rush Kress to Alessandro Contini Bonacossi 3 August 1954, SHKFA, Series 1.7b, 1.7b Dealer Correspondence and Bills of Sale, Contini Bonacossi, (Boxes 110 - 111).

<sup>592</sup>On the Contini Bonacossi Collection Gift at the Galleria degli Uffizi, (2018) and Bruci, 2016.

objects, more than a third of which were paintings. By 1962, twenty-one years after the opening of the National Gallery, the building and distribution of the Kress Collection was complete. Only 122 paintings of the original Kress gift have been retained by the National Gallery, while over 240 objects, including paintings, sculptures, plaquettes, and small bronzes have been added through loans, acquisitions, and deaccessions negotiated between the National Gallery and the Kress Foundation until 1962. Of the 600 objects provided by Contini Bonacossi to the National Gallery through Kress, only a handful remain today in the museum's permanent collections. The Kress Giveaway program came to an end in 1962. More than 80 museums across the United States, from Puerto Rico to Hawaii, continue to benefit from Kress's generosity to this day.

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As Allen Smith points out in his essay on the history of American cultural foundations, "Kress's -and his Foundation's- gifts exemplifies the national aims of the donor who, like other collector-driven philanthropies, its programs were structured around the donor's acquisitions."<sup>593</sup> If considered from this perspective, because Contini Bonacossi was Kress's first and most formative dealer, it is clear that ultimately his sales did not just satisfy Kress's private hobby or financial interests. It has been suggested that Kress' position as a vendor of bulk consumer goods influenced his early approach to art collecting. His technique of buying paintings in bulk and at a bargain price, to the detriment of the quality of what he was acquiring, raised questions about him as a canonic collector, as well as raising suspicions about Contini Bonacossi taking advantage of the millionaire's money.<sup>594</sup> This perspective does not aid our understanding of Kress's reason for collecting and severely diminishes his purpose. The discriminating factor of Contini Bonacossi's offerings, I think, was Kress's interest in the historical and educational value of art over its ability to generate a profit or making an investment. Frankfurter shared this perspective when in 1944 he noted that Kress "understood that a well preserved work

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<sup>593</sup>Smith, 2010, 271.

<sup>594</sup>Perry, 1994, 18.



of art by secondary painters was more valuable than masterpieces in poor condition.”<sup>595</sup> Kress’s historical and educational penchant acted as his philanthropic muse, creating museum collections from his purchases. Nearly all the artworks Contini Bonacossi sold to Kress and his Foundation never re-entered the market. They were subjected to cross-continental movement from Contini Bonacossi (Europe) to Kress (the United States), ending up in public collections across the US as part of the Kress Regional Program. Spread across North America, these objects became part of the cultural heritage of the United States. Smith defined Kress’s aims as “charitable in the audiences he hoped to reach but also philanthropic in the moral and aesthetic transformation he hoped to bring about”.<sup>596</sup> It is from this perspective that we should assess the role of Contini Bonacossi’s dealing with Kress and, ultimately, his legacy.

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<sup>595</sup>Frankfurter, 1944. 16.

<sup>596</sup>Smith, 2010, 271.

## Conclusion

This dissertation argued for contextualizing Contini Bonacossi's commerce (and more specifically, its social and cultural aspect) in the cross-continental movement of cultural goods of the first half of the last century enabled by European art dealers and American collectors instrumental in forming American private and public collections of European art. It had the goal to unearth archival evidence about Contini Bonacossi's role and engagement in the international art resale market, and his network, which emerged as a well-balanced ecosystem in which every transaction, either sale or exchange, represented sustainability and the regeneration of cultural values. This regeneration was enabled by the recipients of his business through their donations. As Calvin Tomkins wrote, for these collectors, donating was a matter of "cultural welfare" as they wanted "to educate their fellow countrymen and women, to open their senses to fine art, to train their eyes to appreciate beauty".<sup>597</sup> Peter Temin reported the example of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

The Boston Museum of Fine Arts for example began its collection with plaster casts of classical sculpture. The aim was not conservation: but encouragement of a classical education. The calm demeanor of classical statuary would communicate a multi-dimensional message to the urban public.<sup>598</sup>

In bringing to light unpublished archival documentation of works handled by Contini Bonacossi, which described also how he traded and presented the works in his *gallerie*, as well as his interactions with other dealers, this work aimed to add to our knowledge and understanding of important sources for the study of the history of private and public collecting.

The peak years of Contini Bonacossi's commercial activities were a crucial time for many American museums, which were being formed, as well as expanded and

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<sup>597</sup>Tomkins, 1973, 20.

<sup>598</sup>Temin, 1990, 181.

diversified, from private collections.<sup>599</sup> J. P. Morgan summarized the United States' ideal of the public art museum when he expressed his vision for the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "an undreamed collection of art so great and so complete that a trip to Europe would be superfluous for US citizens."<sup>600</sup> This vision was shared by most of Contini Bonacossi's clients, who applied it to their respective patronized institutions, as this research has shown.

As mentioned, the celebrated scholar and curator Wilhelm von Bode underlined the cultural power of this trade and defined these dealers as "bearers of European culture."<sup>601</sup> In 1992, the scholar of collecting Krzysztof Pomian, in characterizing the American art collector as an *evergete*, reiterated the social and cultural impact of the cross-continental movement of cultural goods that these dealers enabled.<sup>602</sup> As the transactions detailed in the second chapter prove, Contini Bonacossi's business orientation was very much in line with the market trends for Old Master paintings of the time and that, in large part, fed American art patrons' appetite for High European art. In this *milieu* he traded Old Masters painting of every school: Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, and German, spanning from the gold panels of the so-called primitives to eighteenth-century works. He relied on an international web of agents and representatives, who scoured the market and worked on his behalf in every corner of the world. Most notably, Frederick Stephens in New York was fundamental to his dealings in the United States (fig. 10); in Rome, Hendrick C. Andersen (1872-1940) (fig. 11) and Durr Friedley (1889-1938); and, in the UK and Italy, Gualtiero

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<sup>599</sup>During the first decades of the twentieth century, in the United States Germain Bazin wrote in 1967 "public service became the *raison d'être* of the museological institution, particularly in America, where the pedagogical habit metamorphosed into a veritable obsession'. Bazin, in quoting the director of the American Association of Museum, Laurence Vail Coleman, defend the American museum as 'an institution which uses its collections for a specific end: to rise the general public's eye of culture and knowledge; it does not serve the interests of a particular class of group'. In her iconic book, Carol Duncan, agreed in the educational and philanthropic efforts of the American museum but challenged this statement arguing that, in reality, 'decisions made by trustees behind closed doors often contradicted their public rhetoric about the museum's mission to serve the entire community'. Duncan, 1995.

<sup>600</sup>Strouse, 1999, 496-497.

<sup>601</sup>Bode, 1912.

<sup>602</sup>Pomian, 1992, 18.

Volterra (1901-1967).<sup>603</sup> Although briefly, it is worth mentioning that, even if Contini Bonacossi operated exclusively in the secondary market, he was not indifferent to contemporary Italian artists. Considering his ties with the United States where French contemporary painting was very popular, it is surprising to note that, as far as we can document at this date, he was not interested in this genre, as he seemed to be immune also to contemporary American artists. His interest in modern painting was as aesthetically conservative as the artists he collected and supported. He patronized living Italian artists by buying their works (as at the First Quadriennale in Rome in 1931), where Contini Bonacossi bought nineteen works by Italian living artists and employed them as agents for his trade, as in the case of Hendrick Andersen (although not Italian by birth).<sup>604</sup> These artists did not seem to be popular in the United States, the core of Contini Bonacossi's business activities. Indeed, we can see this in an unflattering review of an exhibition, held at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1931, that showed the work of seventy painters exhibited at the First Quadriennale.<sup>605</sup> Documentation of Contini Bonacossi's holdings of modern art remains scarce. This nucleus has been overlooked by scholarly studies, probably because it was never part of his trade. For this reason, it was not discussed in this thesis.

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<sup>603</sup>In the Brummer Gallery Collection Cards at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Frederick Stephens is recorded as "dealer pictures, representative of Contini" and as a resident of New York City at 280 Park Avenue. <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16028coll9/id/51904/rec/6>. [Accessed 23 March 2016].

<sup>604</sup>For a complete list of his purchases, see the appendix in *XIV Quadriennale di Roma, Retrospettive 1931-1948*, 2005, 202-205.

<sup>605</sup>"Partly from a desire to isolate whatever may be purely national in contemporary painting, partly perhaps from appreciation of the efforts of Italian artists of today to free themselves from the traditions of their nineteenth century past, the Baltimore Museum of Art has brought to this country some seventy canvases exhibited previously this year in the Prima Quadriennale in Rome. Will there be a Modigliani, asks the visitor? No, for these are the works of living artists. Nor has Giorgio di Chirico contributed to the group, perhaps because he has allied himself too completely with Paris. In the absence of these two the visitors may look about comfortably for that flavor of nationality which the title of the show implies. Conversation Piece by the untrained peasant painter, Gisberto Ceracchini. Here at least is a modern composition in the Grand Style. Based, obviously, upon a deep admiration for Caravaggio and for Poussin, the painting reveals personal strength, a thoroughly modern attitude towards the relation of essential forms, and a superb sense of values and color. If these paintings represent the fair level of contemporary Italian art, the connoisseur who seeks for a national element must discount a lack of the intellectual power of the more fully developed international group, known as the École de Paris, and find here the healthy but not very stimulating reactions of a group of realists whose art is most promising wherever it is least derivative". Patterson Spencer, 1931, 31.

A passage from Vitale Bloch's report of 1939 on American collections captures the quintessence of the problem and the larger cultural issues at stake:

I'm afraid that, speaking in general, the younger American museum Directors and art students are not much interested in what I should call the non-aesthetic or non-formal qualities of a picture. [...]Remember too that the tendency to emphasize the formal elements of an old picture is often combined with the dogmatic belief that a really great artist must be a forerunner of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French Art, which is so much in vogue in America. [...]There is even a certain fashion for Poussin. Studying Poussin, the American pays homage to Cezanne. The American seems sometimes to forget how much the greatest of these Frenchmen has owed to Italy and Spain [...]. Gradually the idea of evolution has been abandoned and with the increased interest in Italian art and the widening of the horizon by considerable research, the attention of American collectors has been directed toward the Northern Italian, particularly the Venetians, partly because the work of these artists has been revealed as one of the fundamental sources of Impressionist art. For the Baroque painters, I encountered only a few Caravaggesque paintings. Museum directors seem to prefer Magnasco, Strozzi.<sup>606</sup>

Researching on Contini Bonacossi meant digging into the complexity of the global cultural and political environment of the interwar years. It also entailed consideration of economic transactions of art works as cultural and political exchange. Profiling Contini Bonacossi proved to be a challenging task due to his complex and nuanced intrinsic characteristics: a sort of *marchand-mercier* without a store, a collector, a tastemaker, and a patron, a diplomatic and political figure. One may even think of Contini Bonacossi as a palimpsest of an era. The archival evidence and the analysis proposed in this work justify his definition of himself as an *antiquario de son temps* and it is as such that he should be considered.

To the extent his political affiliation brought success, this dissertation has sought to offer a clear perspective. Certainly his ability to create for himself a semi-diplomatic career as a steward of Italian genius facilitated his business. At the same time it would be reductive to attribute his success to his political position alone. This would be inaccurate and would diminish one of the most significant eras of art collecting, both in the public as well as in private sphere.

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<sup>606</sup>Vitale Bloch, Report on American Collections, 1939. Durlacher and Brothers Papers. box 1, Folder 3; Getty Research Institute Special Collection and Visual Resources, Los Angeles (GRI); Mazzocca, 1975, 844.

I believe Contini Bonacossi's most important legacy is his contribution to the philanthropic endeavor undertaken by his most important client Samuel Kress. Kress's plan, which Contini Bonacossi helped execute through his sales, went beyond Kress's willingness to aid the government in creating the National Gallery of Art. It took on a national scope. As summarized in 1953 by the director of the Kress Foundation, Guy Emerson:

For many years most of the greatest works of art in the US have been concentrated in the museums of a few large cities. If you wanted to see paintings, you had to go to the cities. But in Italy, where some of the greatest works were produced, fine paintings can be seen in almost every town. They are not all gathered in Venice, Rome or Florence. There are fifty cities or more in Italy where the native or the traveler can see examples of the greatest and the best. That is the ideal we now have for the United States."<sup>607</sup>

Assessing how this cultural crusade affected Contini Bonacossi's trade from 1927 to 1955 has been one of the aims of this work.

Looking through the lens of art dealing and collecting gives a new perspective to the complex system of international relationships that developed in the immediate years after the First World War, still one of the least-studied aspects of the post First World War period, especially in regard to relationships between Italy and the US. Contini Bonacossi's life and activities are a telling example of the intricacies of those years. Documenting Contini Bonacossi's case and unearthing archival documentation concerning his trade, adds an important chapter to this complex scenario.

In offering evidence of ownership and in tracing the status of paintings Contini Bonacossi traded despite the absence of a business archive and piecing together primary material, I believe this work offered a sound contribution to that component of art-historical scholarship that has long been associated with dealing, which is provenance, as pointed out by Ivan Gaskell. In his essay "Tradesmen as Scholars: Interdependencies in the Study and Exchange of Art" Gaskell stresses the relevance of provenance research as an important scholarly contribution and not only for being "one of the central tasks of the compiler of scholarly catalogues, whether of the

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<sup>607</sup>Emerson, 1961, 830.

works of individual artists or of collections” characterizing it as “one of the most intellectually demanding fields of inquiry”.<sup>608</sup>

Many important themes interrelated with the art market run through this work: cultural heritage, patriotism, cultural diplomacy, public education, profit, politics, philanthropy, capitalism, the tensions between public good and personal gain. Ultimately, this study has striven to rethink the cultural and art-historical role of the *antiquari* (art dealers), to look at them not solely as market professionals engaged in the dynamics of supply, demand and profit, but foremost as ‘bearers and sellers of culture’ fully embedded with the political and cultural environment of their time, and so to acknowledge and report on their active role in the dissemination and interpretation of cultural heritage.

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<sup>608</sup>Gaskell, 2002, 147.

## Illustrations



Figure 1. Photograph of Maria Pia, Alessandro and Oscar Contini





Figure 2. Photograph of Alessandro Contini Bonacossi.



Figure 3. Photograph of Erminia Vittoria Galli Contini from 1906.

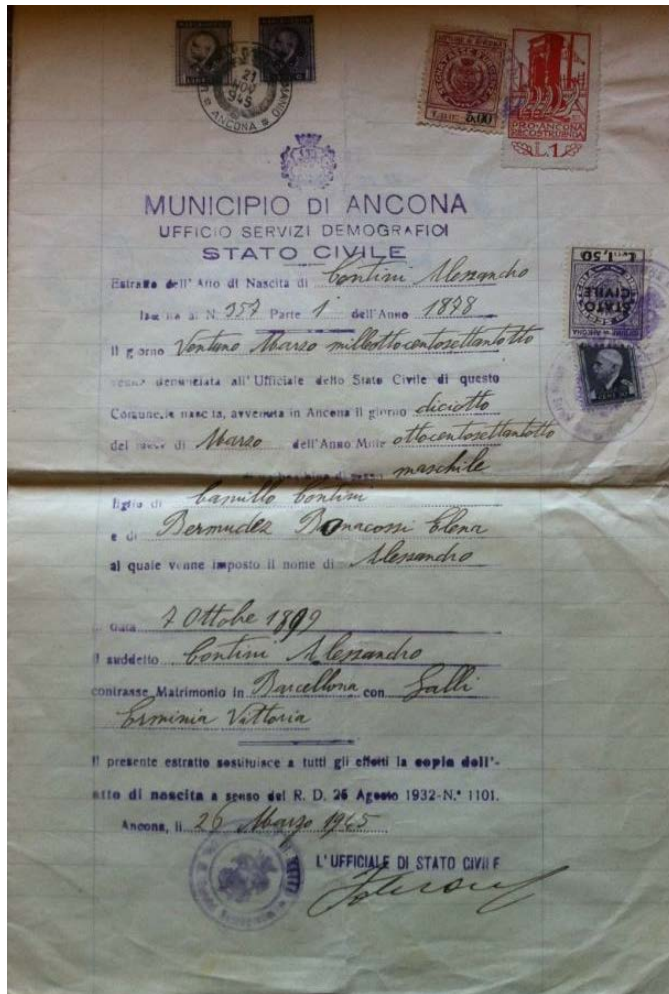


Figure 4. Photograph of Alessandro Contini Bonacossi's marriage certificate released from the city of Ancona



Figure 5. Copy of the cover page of the magazine *España Filatélica*.



Figure 6. Photograph of Alessandro and Vittoria with their children Vittorina and Alessandro Augusto and Beatrice Galli with Oscar Contini.





Figure 7. Photograph of Maria Pia Contini in Madrid in 1905.



Figure 8. Photograph of Alessandro and Vittoria Contini in Madrid.



Figure 9. Fernando Labrada, *Portrait of the Countess Erminia Vittoria Contini Bonacossi*, oil on canvas, 98 x 59 cm, private collection.



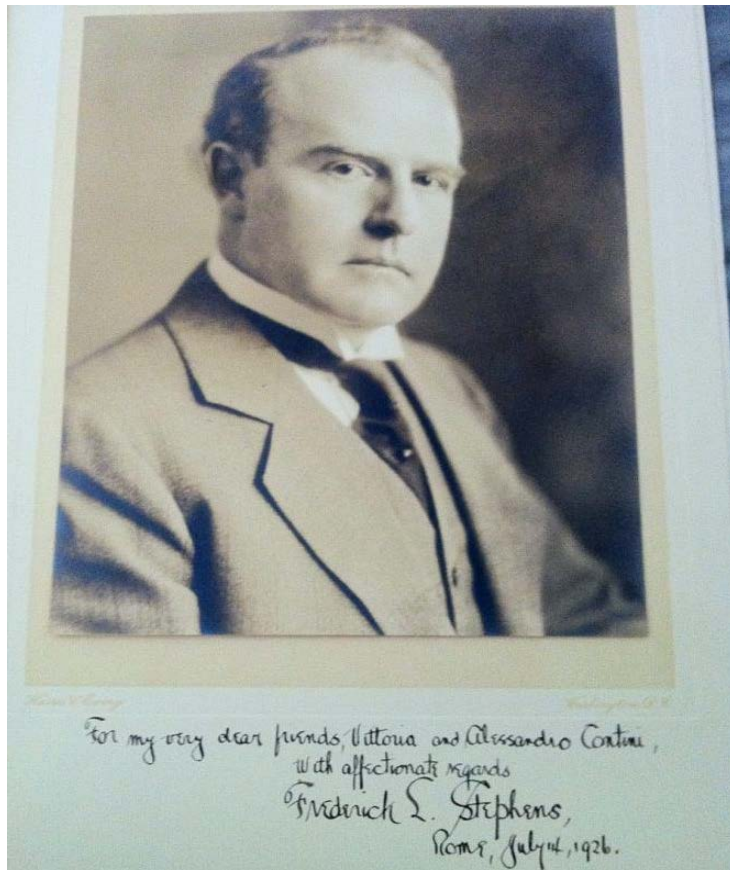


Figure 10. Photograph of Frederick Stephens in 1926.



Figure 11. Photograph of Hendrick Andersen.



Figure 12. Photograph of Villa Vittoria, Florence, Exterior.



Figure 13. Photograph of Villa Vittoria, Florence, Interior.



Figure 14. Photograph of Villa Vittoria. Interior.





Figure 15. Raffaellino del Garbo (1466-1524) *Madonna Enthroned with Saints and Angels*, 198.1 x 214.7 cm, oil on poplar panel, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.44.12

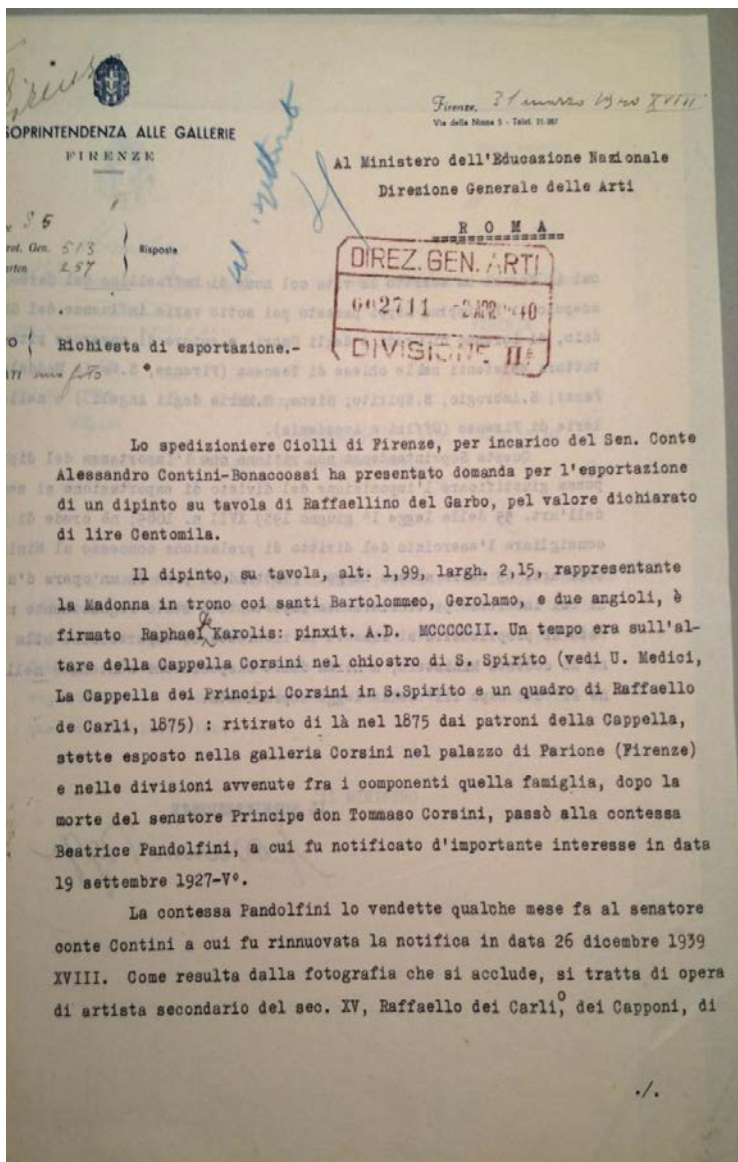


Figure 16. Copy of the Export License, ACS, AABBA, Div. III, 1929-60, busta 258bis.

REPUBBLICA ITALIANA  
MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO  
DIREZIONE GENERALE  
DIREZIONE REGIONALE  
DIREZIONE PROVINCIALE  
DIREZIONE DISTrettuale  
DIREZIONE CANTONALE  
DIREZIONE MUNICIPALE

... cui il Vasari ha scritto la vita col nome di Raffaellino del Garbo, discepolo di Filippino Lippi passato poi sotto varie influenze del Ghirlandajo, di Lorenzo di Credi e degli Umbri, e autore di numerose pitture tuttora esistenti nelle chiese di Toscana (Firenze, S. Maria Maddalena dei Fassi; S. Ambrogio, S. Spirito; Siena, S. Maria degli Angeli.) e nelle gallerie di Firenze (Uffizi e Accademia).

Questa Soprintendenza non ritiene che l'importanza del dipinto possa giustificare l'imposizione del divieto di esportazione ai sensi dell'art. 35 della legge 1° giugno 1939 XVII n. 1089; nè crede di poter consigliare l'esercizio del diritto di prelazione concesso al Ministero dall'art. 39 della stessa legge. Trattandosi però di un'opera d'arte il cui interesse particolarmente importante è stato regolarmente notificato al proprietario si rimette la richiesta di esportazione alla decisione di codesto Ministero, a norma delle disposizioni contenute nella sezione II<sup>a</sup> del capo III<sup>o</sup> della legge sopracitata.

IL SOPRINTENDENTE  
*Novanni Poggi*

Figure 17. Copy of Export License, ACS, AABBA, Div. III, 1929-60, busta 258bis.





Figure 18. Copy after Goya (Spanish, 1800 or shortly after), *Infanta María Luisa (1782–1824) and Her Son Carlos Luis (1799–1883)*, oil on canvas, 99.4 x 68.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915, 30.95.243.



Figure 19. Lorenzo Lotto, *Saint Catherine*, 57.2 x 50.2 cm, oil on panel, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation 1939.1.117.



Figure 20. Bernardino Luini, *Madonna of the Carnation*, oil on panel, 43.8 x 40.3 cm, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation 1939.1.152



Figure 21. Francisco Goya, *Saint Ambrose*, oil on canvas, 190x113cm, Cleveland Museum of Art,



Figure 22. Francisco de Goya, *Bullfighter*, oil on canvas, 53 x 42 cm, Contini Bonacossi Collection, Galleria degli Uffizi, n.22, P1766.



Figure 23. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo and Studio, *Portrait of a Gentleman*,  
*presumably a member of the Ostigliani Family*, oil on canvas, 125.5 by 198 cm.

Location Unknown





Figure 24. El Greco, *Annunciation*.ca. 1576, oil on canvas. 117 x 98 cm, no. 172 (1975.35). Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



Figure 25. Copy after Rembrandt van Rijn, *Judas returning the thirty pieces of silver* (in or after 1629), oil on panel, 78.5x102cm. The Museum Het Rembrandthuis, where it is on loan from the Cultural Heritage Agency (Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst), Amsterdam, Netherlands





Figure 26. Paolo Veronese, *Giuseppe da Porto with his Son Adriano*, oil on canvas, 210 x 140 cm, Contini Bonacossi Collection, Galleria degli Uffizi, n.16



Figure 27. Attributed to Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of a woman with a lace ruff 'à la confusion'*, oil on canvas. Location Unknown.



Figure 28. Domenico Veneziano, *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata*, tempera on panel, 27.5 x 30.5 cm, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Gift of Samuel H. Kress, 1939.1.140.



Figure 29. Attributed to Ugolino da Siena, (1317-1327), *Saint Margaret Holding the Cross*, tempera on wood, 61 x 30.5 cm, Portland Art Museum, Gift of The Samuel H.

Kress Foundation, 61.41





Figure 30. Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo, *Shepherd with a Flute*, oil on canvas, 97 x 77.9 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 85.PA.162



Figure 31. Dosso Dossi, *Aeneas and Achates on the Libyan Coast*, oil on canvas, 58.7 x 87.6 cm, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1939.1.250



Figure 32. Cornelius de Vos, *Portrait of a Lady with Her Daughter*, (1620), oil on panel, 110.5 x 86cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.44.34.





Figure 33. Giovanni Bellini, *Portrait of Joerg Fugger*, (1474), oil on panel , 26 x 20 cm, Norton Simon Art Foundation M.1969.13.P





Figure 34. Giovan Battista Cima da Conegliano, *Crucifixion*, (1488-93), 82.5 X 115.2cm, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, UK,38.4.



Figure 35. Giovanni Bellini (and Vincenzo Catena?), *Venus or Lady at her Toilet* (Lady with a Mirror), oil on panel, 67.3x87cm. Location Unknown.



Figure 36. After Lorenzo Lotto, *The Holy Family with a Donatrix as St. Catherine of Alexandria*, Oil on canvas, 70.9 x 94.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 30.5.



Figure 37. Melchior d' Hondecoeter, *Peacocks*, oil on canvas, 190.2 x 134.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, Gift of Samuel H. Kress, 1927, 27.250.1.





Figure 38. Livio Mehus, *Huntress Resting*, oil on canvas, 68.6 x 52.4 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 21.751.



Figure 39. Livio Mehus, *Wrestlers in a Landscape*, oil on canvas, 67.9 x 52.7 cm,  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 21.752.



Figure 40. Studio of Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with a Goldfinch*, oil, tempera and gold on panel, 290 1/4x 16 in. Location Unknown.



Figure 41. Pietro Lorenzetti, *Madonna and Child with the Blessing Christ, and Saints Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Alexandria with Angels*, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of Frieda Schiff Warburg in memory of her husband, Felix M. Warburg, 1941.5.1.a-c





Figure 42. After Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Jerome*, oil on panel, 69.2 x 45.1 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Frieda Schiff Warburg in memory of her husband, Felix M. Warburg, 41.654.



Figure 43. Orazio Gentileschi, *The Virgin with the Sleeping Christ Child*, oil on canvas, 99.8 x 85.3 cm, Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Museum, Gift through William A. Coolidge in memory of Marian Lady Bateman, 1976.1.



Figure 44. Photograph of Villa Vittoria, Florence. Bedroom. On the wall, Orazio Gentileschi *Madonna* (fig. 35). Capezzana Family Archive.



Figure 45. Unidentified artist, Italian (Venetian), 16th century, *Portrait of a Man at a Writing Desk*, oil on canvas, 27.188, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Mrs. W. Scott Fitz, 27.188 (Accessioned as a work attributed to Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez).





Figure 46. Workshop of Lorenzo Lotto, *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*, oil on panel, 41.9 x 48.6 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, n. 27.189.



Figure 47. Lombard Painter, *Portrait of a Bearded Prelate*, oil on canvas, 36.6 × 29.8 cm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Edith A. and Percy S. Straus Collection, 44.563.



Figure 48. Michelino da Besozzo, *The Marriage of the Virgin*, tempera on gold wood, 65.1 x 47.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Maitland F. Griggs Collection, Bequest of Maitland F. Griggs, 1943, 43.98.7.



Figure 49. Niccolo dell 'Abate, *Portrait of a Child of the Bracciforte Family*, oil on canvas, 165x88 cm, Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester (NY), Collezione M.C. Taylor, Marion Sutton Gould Fund, 76.13.



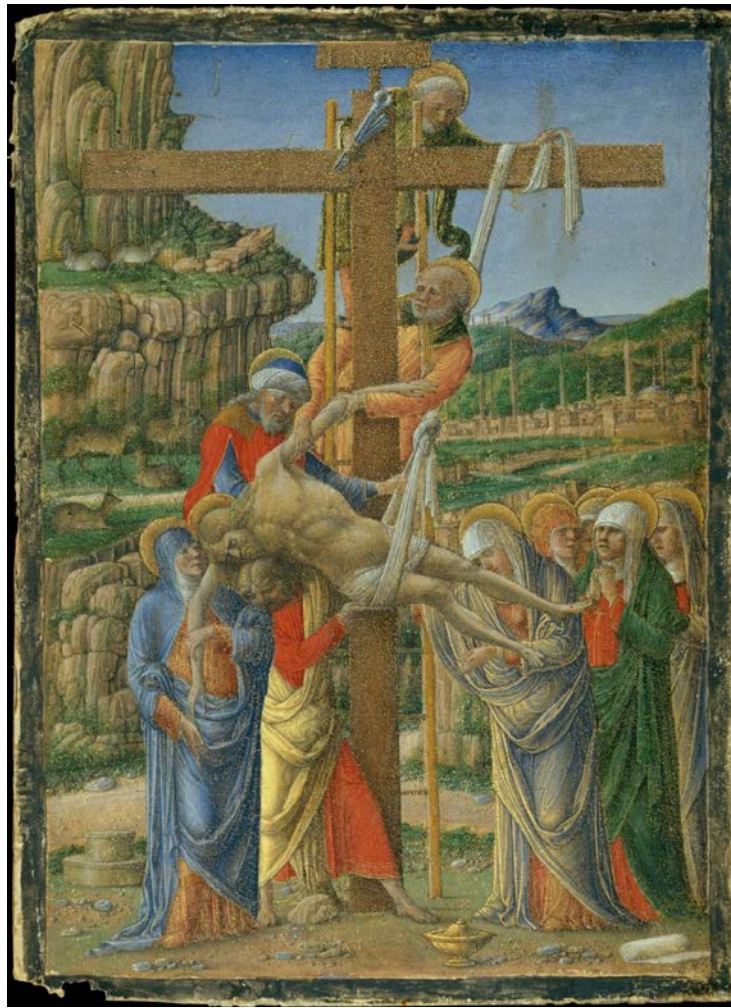


Figure 50. Girolamo da Cremona, *Descent from the Cross*, tempera on parchment, laid down on wood, 15.9 x 11.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Jules Bache Collection, 49.7.8.



Figure 51. Masolino, *Trinity*, tempera on panel, previously in the Detroit Institute of Art. Location and Details Unknown.



Figure 52. Pietro Perugino, *Saint Nicholas of Tolentino Restoring Two Partridges to life*, tempera on panel, 29.2 × 54 cm, The Detroit Institute of Art, Founders Society Purchase, Elizabeth Champe Fund, 25.146.



Figure 53. Giovanni Battista Cima, *Annunciation to the Virgin*, paint on wood panel, 63.5 x 90.8 cm, The Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth, 43.478.

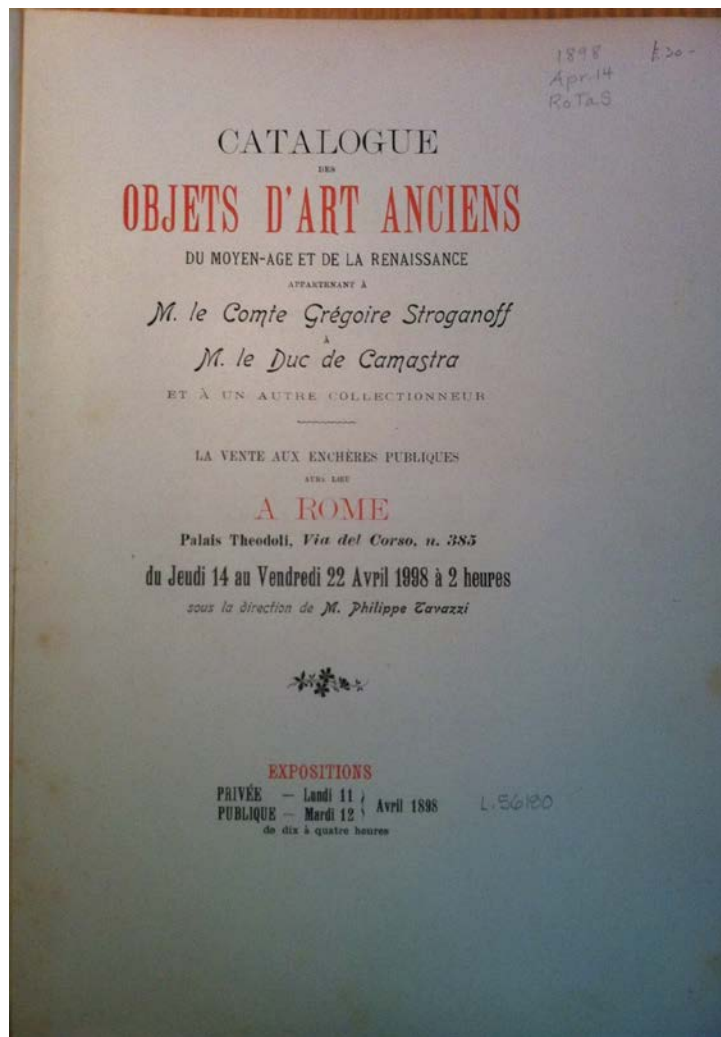


Figure 54. Copy of the front page of the sale catalogue for the Stroganoff Sale in 1898, Rome.



ERCOLE DE' ROBERTI

(ÉCOLE DE FERRARE)

1430-1496

## ALLÉGORIE (?)

PLANCHE XX.

Le sujet de ce petit tableau peint en grisaille, or sur noir, est difficile à expliquer; nous lui avons gardé le nom d'*Allégorie*, sous lequel il est généralement connu. On voit, à gauche, un personnage assis, avec tunique et manteau, qui se penche en avant pour recevoir, des mains d'un homme agenouillé, un crâne et une palme.

Probablement c'est un fragment de prédelle. L'attribution à Ercole Roberti est fondée principalement sur la ressemblance avec les petites figures peintes en grisaille sur la base du trône du retable de Santa Maria in Porto de Ravenne, aujourd'hui à la pinacothèque de Brera à Milan (n. 428, CORRADO RICCI, *La pinacoteca di Brera*, Bergamo, 1907, planche à p. 90).

D'autres critiques ont avancé pour notre tableau le nom de Bramantino; mais M. Suida dans sa monographie sur ce peintre, n'accepte pas l'attribution; M. Berenson est pour l'attribution à Ercole Roberti, que M. Venturi ne croit pas absolument certaine.

Bois: 0,25 x 0,31

[W. SUIDA, *Die Jugendwerke des Bartolommeo Suardi genannt Bramantino*, Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, Wien, XXV, 1904, p. 70; B. BERENSON, *The north Italian painters of the Renaissance*, 1907, p. 213; VENTURI, dans *L'Art*, 1908, p. 426].

Figure 55. Copy of catalogue (Bellini Allegory, fig 56) at the Stroganoff Sale



Figure 56. Giovanni Bellini, *Pagan Allegory*, oil on panel, 31 x 25 cm., location unknown.



Figure 57. Photograph of Samuel Henry Kress Apartment at 1020 Fifth Avenue,  
New York City.





Figure 58. Photograph of Villa Vittoria, Bellini Room. From the left: Giovanni Bellini *Crucifixion* (Musee du Louvre, Paris); center: Giovanni Bellini *Saint Jerome*, Contini Bonacossi Collection, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, n.25; Right: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*, (unknown location).



Figure 59. Gioacchino Assereto, *Pieta*, oil on canvas, 129.5 x 157.5 cm, Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens – Jacksonville, *Florida*. AP.1988.1.1.



Figure 60, Francesco De Mura, *The Triumph of Baccus*. Location Unknown.



Figure 61. Francesco Cossa, *Madonna and Child*, tempera on wood, 48.9 x 40.2 cm, Sameck Art Museum Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, BL-K10.



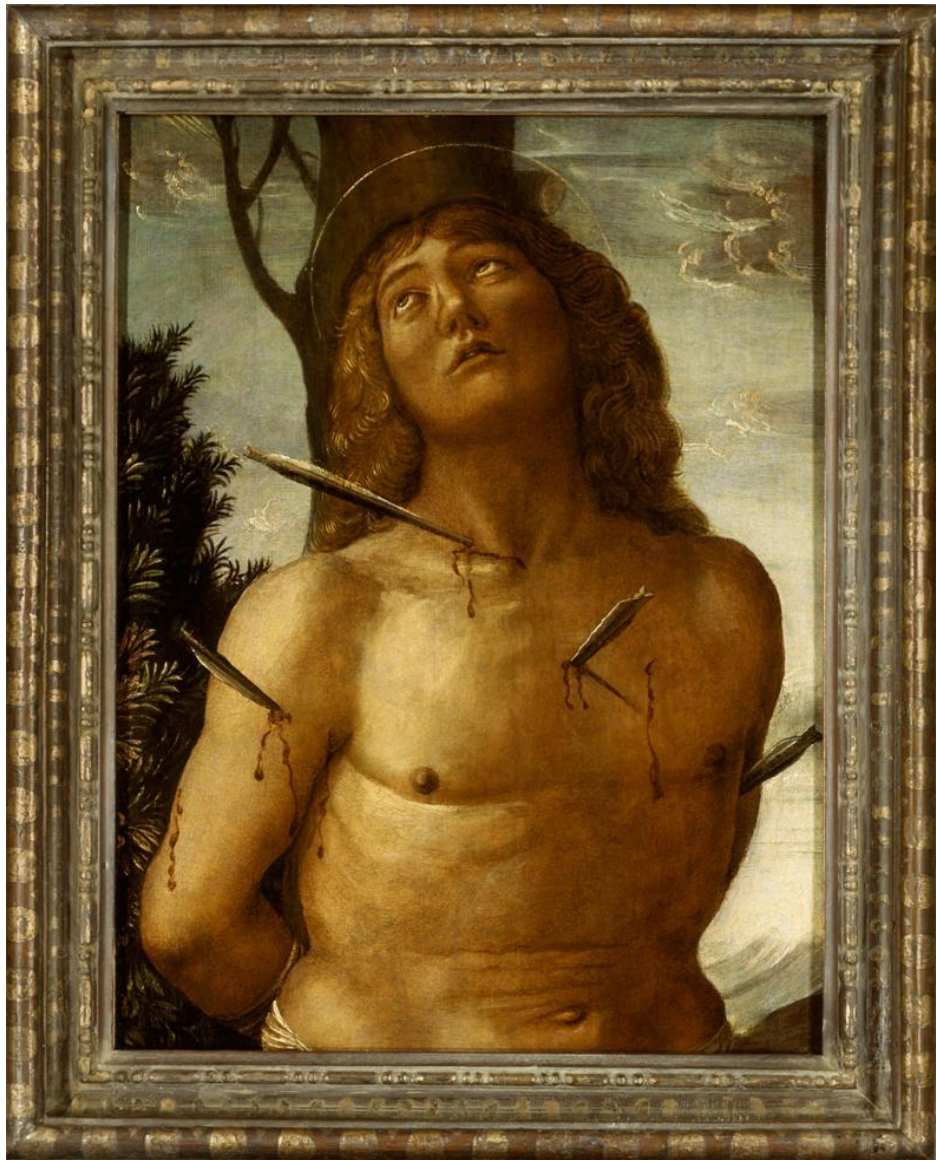


Figure 62. Liberale da Verona, *Saint Sebastian*, tempera on panel, 49.8 x 41, Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery, Nashville, TN, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1979.0656P.

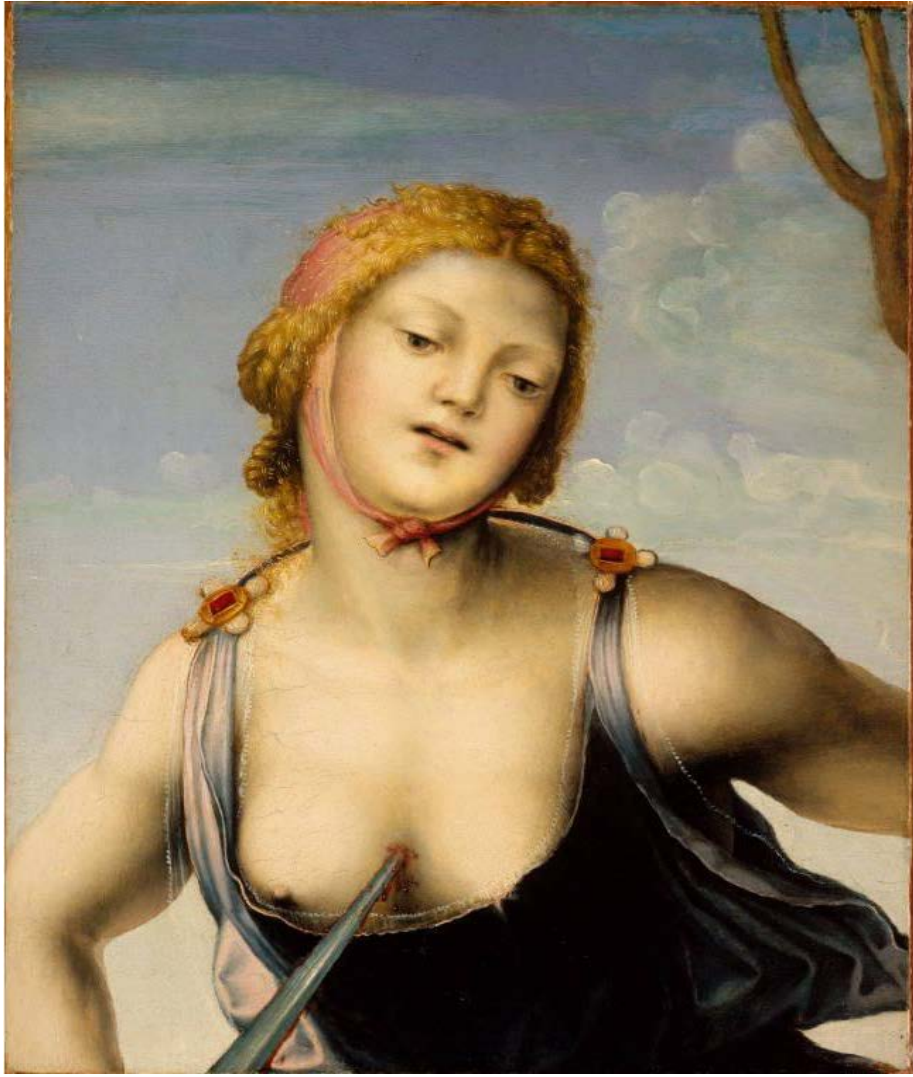


Figure 63. Niccolò Giolfino (now attributed to Domenico Beccafumi), *Lucretia*, oil on panel, 41.3 x 32.7 cm, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.82.



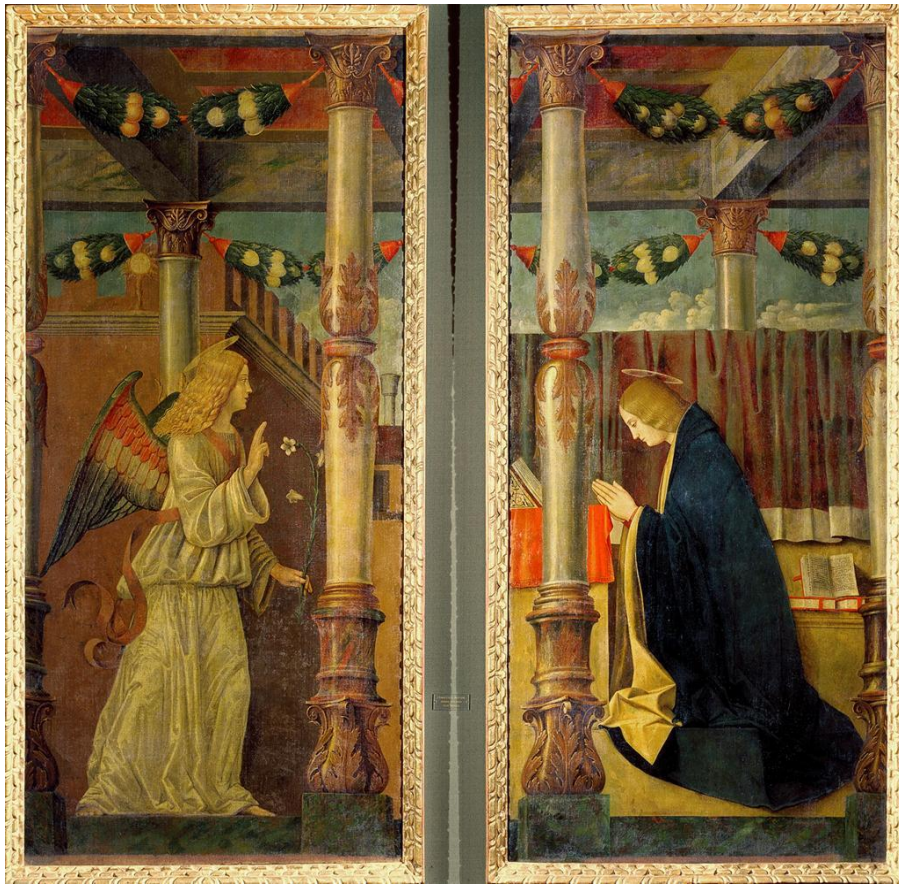


Figure 64. Domenico Morone, *Annunciation*, oil on canvas, 208 x 94 cm each, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 11,12.



Figure 65. Domenico Morone, *Adoration*, oil on canvas, 83.5 x 99.4 cm, Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, CMA1954.28.



Figure 66. Attributed to Giovan Francesco Caroto, *Madonna and Child*, 59.1x71.8cm, on canvas, (previously at the Gertrude Herbert Memorial Art Institute where was listed since 1938).





Figure 67. Follower of Vincenzo Foppa, possibly Niccolò da Varallo Circle, *St. John the Baptist Preaching*, on wood, 93.7 x 67.6 cm, Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, CMA 1954.26.



Figure 68. Photograph of Villa Vittoria Rome. Left: Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 75). Short Wall: Francesco Salviati, *Man with a Letter* (previously attributed to Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio) Jacopino del Conte, *Sant'Anna*, (fig. 74) Giuliano Bugardini, *Madonna with the Palm* (fig. 77). Right: Antoniazio Romano, *Crucifixion* (fig. 72) and Defendente Ferrari, *Adoration of the Magi* (fig. 76).



Figure 69. Photograph of Villa Vittoria, Rome, Venetian Room.



Figure 70. Attributed to Lorenzo Lotto *Portrait of a monk*, Mr. and Mrs. Rush Kress Collection.





Figure 71. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Rome, Venetian Room.



Figure 72. Antoniazio Romano, *Crucifixion with Saint Francis*, egg tempera and gilding on panel, 51.4 x 38.4 cm, Bucknell University Art Gallery, Lewisburg, PA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, BL-K16.



Figure 73. Fra Bartolommeo, *Holy Family*, oil on canvas, 150.97 × 91.28 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of The Ahmanson Foundation, M.73.83.





Figure 74. Jacopino del Conte, *Madonna and Child with Saint Elizabeth and Saint John the Baptist*, oil on panel, 161.3 x 119 x 2.9 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 1985.11.1.





Figure 75. Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Birth of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 187.5 x 130.3,  
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, 1747

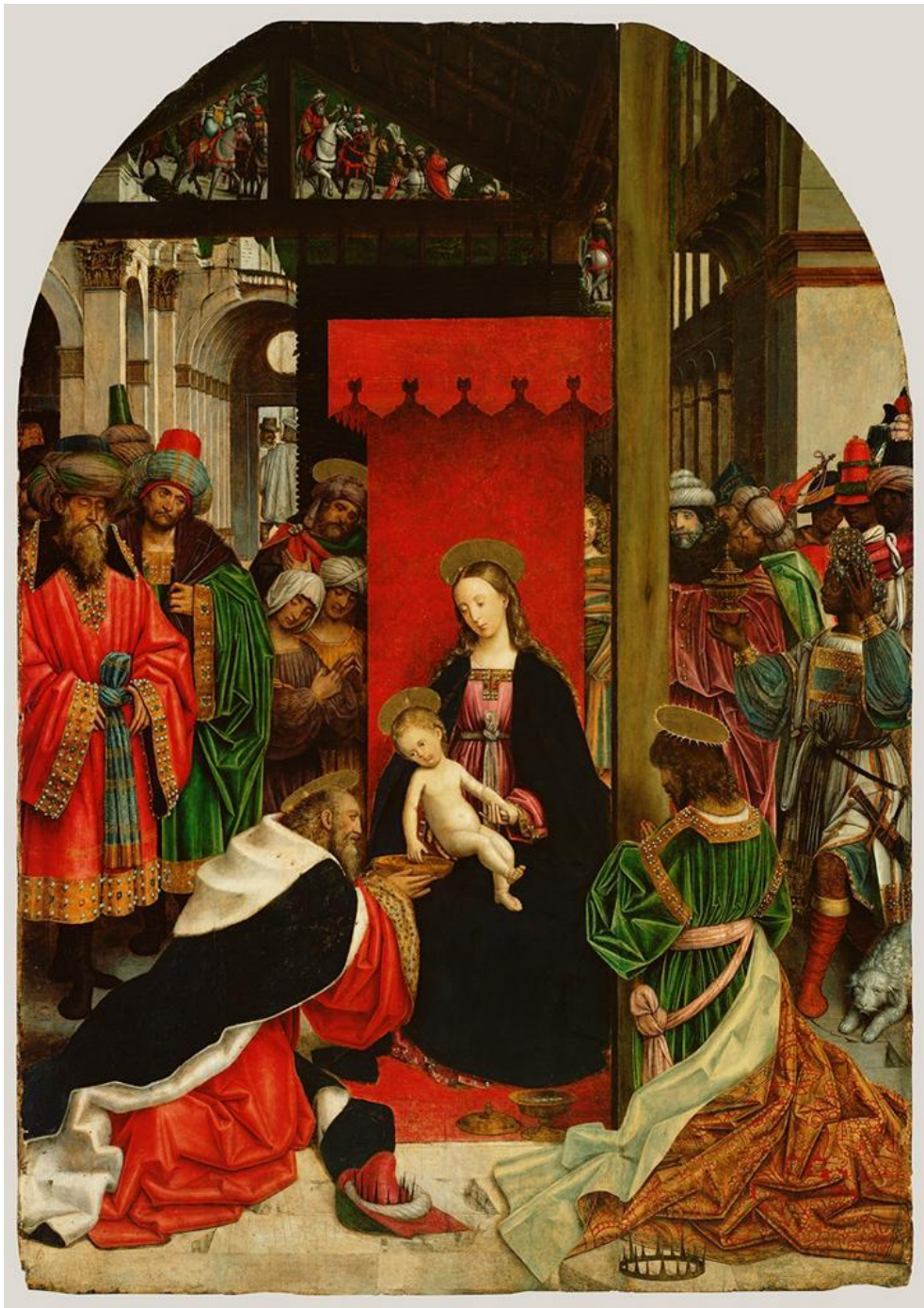


Figure 76. Defendente Ferrari, *Adoration of the Magi*, oil on panel, 262.3 x 186.1 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 74.PB.31





Figure 77. Giuliano Bugiardini, *Madonna and Child with St. John*, oil on panel, 113 x 81.3 cm, Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1960.10.

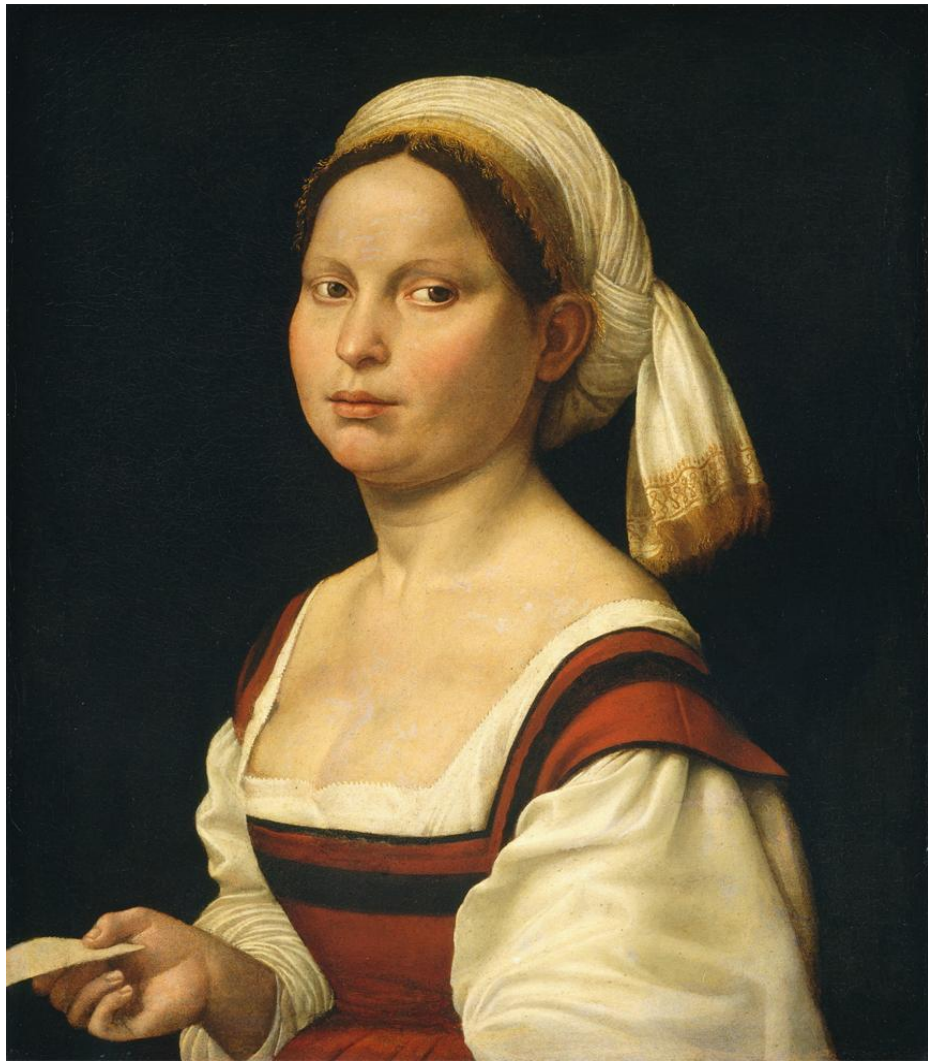


Figure 67. Giuliano Bugiardini, *Portrait of a Woman*, oil on canvas, 57.8 x 49.6 cm,  
The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress  
Foundation, 1939.1.31



Figure 78. Poussin (?), *Baccanale*, Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo, Contini Bonacossi Gift.



Figure 79. Annibale Carracci, *Venus Adorned by the Graces*, oil on canvas, 133 x 170.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 1961.9.9.





Figure 80. Jacob Jordaens, *The Holy Family*, oil on panel, 123.2 x 93.8 cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 55279.



Figure 81. Follower of Frans Hals, *The Young Fisherman*, oil on canvas, 65.4 x 58.8, Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1960.36B.





Figure 82. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Rome. From left: Giovanni Bellini *Madonna in Red*, (fig. 80); in the center: Giovanni Bellini, *Crucifixion*, (fig. 82); right: Giovanni Bellini *Madonna in Blue*, (unknown). The portrait on the short wall next to the door could be a portrait by a follower of Gentile Bellini (fig. 85) which appeared recently at a Sotheby's auction in London in 2014. The provenance on the catalogue though would contradict this photo, as it states that the Count bought it in 1941 (no purchase documentation is offered).



Figure 83. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna in Red*, oil on panel , 79×60, Fondazione Luciano Sorlini, Calvagese della Riviera, Italy.

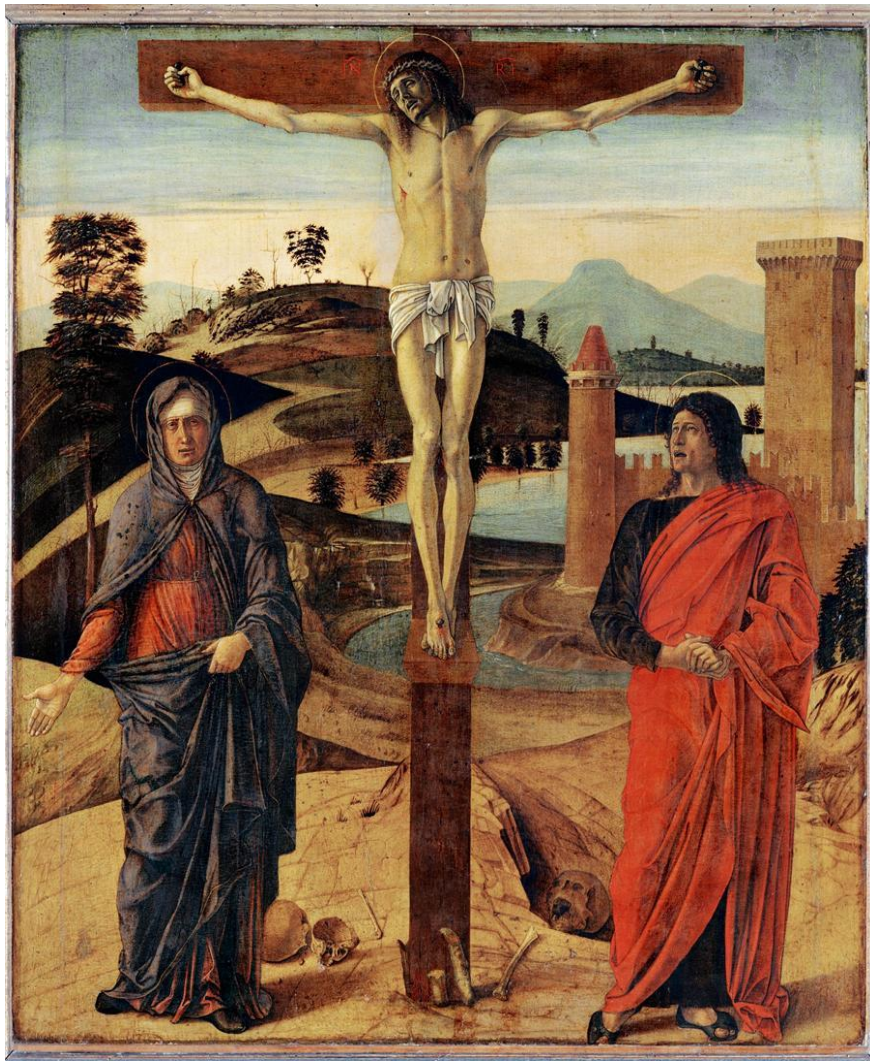


Figure 84. Giovanni Bellini, *Crucifixion*, oil on canvas, 71x63, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, 1970-39.



Figure 85. Follower of Gentile Bellini, *A portrait of Suleyman the Magnificent*, 32.5x28, last location known Sotheby's London 2014.



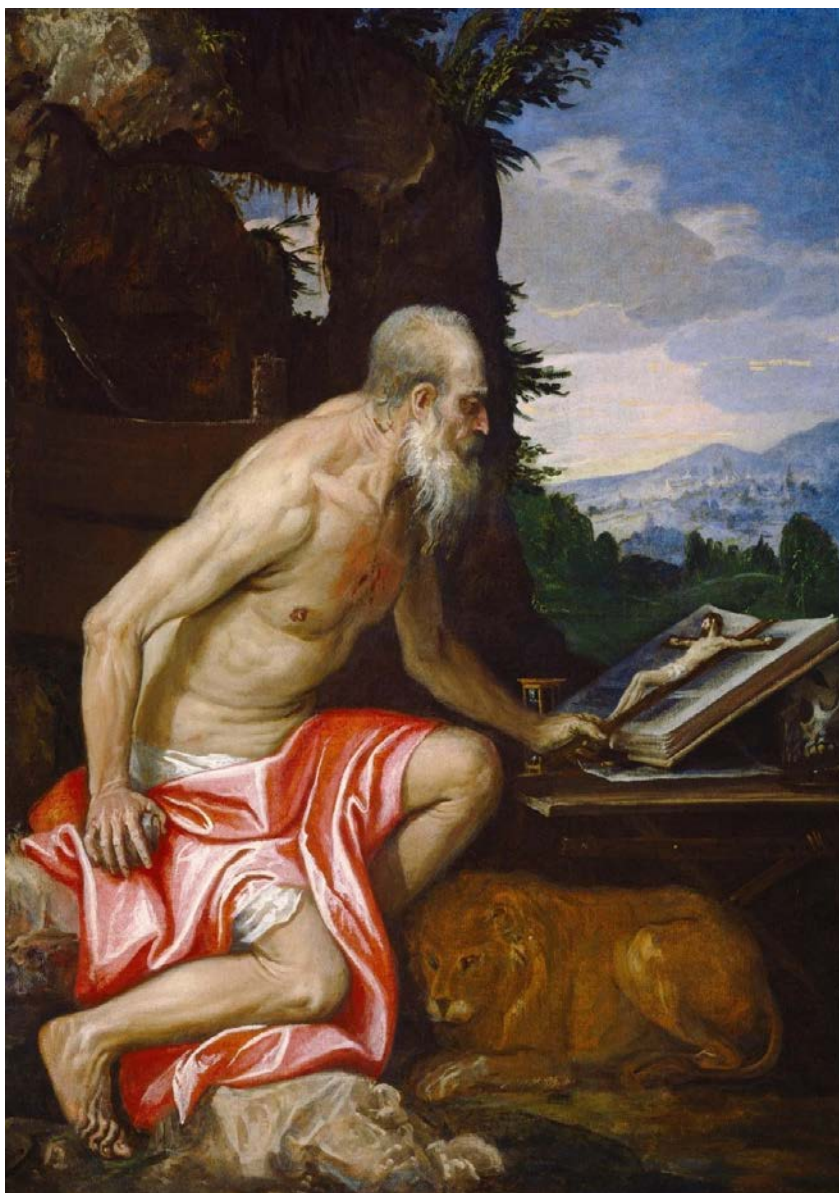


Figure 86. Paolo Veronese, *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, oil on canvas, 108 x 84.1 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.47.



Figure 87. Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta*, oil on wood, 44 x 34 cm, Musée du Louvre, R. F. 1978-1.



Figure 88. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Leda and the Swann*, oil on canvas, 145 x 145 cm,  
Galleria degli Uffizi.inv 1890, n. 9946.





Figure 89. El Greco, *Saint Dominic in Prayer*, oil on canvas, 75x58 cm (location unknown. Last appeared publicly at Sotheby's Auction in London on 3 July 2013, lot n. 19). See Fig. 109.





Figure 90. Federico Barocci, *Saint Andrew's calling*, oil on canvas, 80.5x60.5cm.  
(last appeared at auction at Sotheby's Milan on 9 June 2009, lot. n.16)



Figure 91. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Allegory of Music*, oil on canvas, 130x92 (last appeared at Sotheby's New York auction on 24 January 2008, n. 41).



Figure 92. Vittore Carpaccio, *The Lamentation with Madonna, Saint Joseph of Arimatea and John the Evangelist*, oil on panel, 71x14, (Sotheby's New York 29 January 2015 n.16 as property of a noblewoman).



Figure 93. Attributed to Diego Velazquez, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, oil on canvas, 105x79.5 (Sotheby's New York Auction 9 July 2014, n.31, as property of Barbara Piasecka Johnson).





Figure 94. Juan Batista Dal Mazo, *Portrait of Principe Don Felipe Prospero* (1657-1661), Son of Philip IV of Spain .Standing in an interior, his right hand resting on the back of a chair on which rests a pet dog, oil on canvas, 113x105 (Sotheby's London auction 6 December 2007, n. 247 as property of a private collection).



Figure 95. Bartolome Esteban Murillo, *Adoration of the Magi*, oil on canvas, Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1975.84.

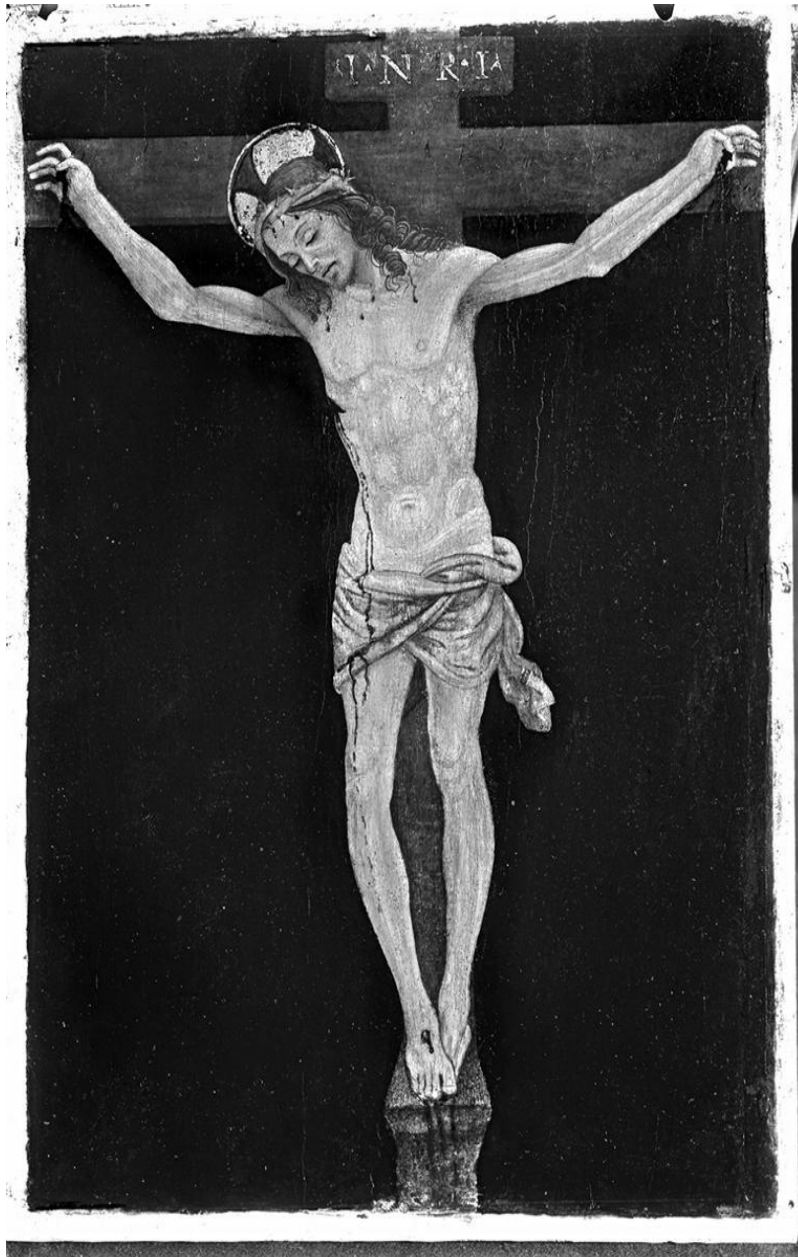


Figure 96. Filippino Lippi, *Crucifixion*, oil and gold on panel, 31.2x23.5 (Christie's New York sale 27 January 2010, n. 2)



Figure 97. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Virgin and the Child with Saint Rose from Viterbo*, Oil on canvas. 190 x 147 cm, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, inv. no. 296 (1968.2).





Figure 98. Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Siege of Asola*, oil on canvas, 198.2 x 469 cm (Christie's London sale 8 July 2014, n. 42, as property of Barbara Piasecka Johnson).



Figure 99. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Atena and Arachne*, oil on canvas, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 34



Figure 100. Francisco de Zurbarán, *Saint Anthony the Abbot*, oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cm, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 23.



Figure 101. Jusepe de Ribera, *Portrait of a Knight of Santiago*, oil on canvas, 146.1 x 106.7 cm, Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas. Algur H. Meadows Collection, MM.77.02.





Figure 102. Luis Tristan, *Holy Family*, oil on canvas, 42.24 x 109.22 cm, The Minneapolis Institute of Art, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 74.2.



Figure 103. El Greco, *Tears of Saint Peter*, oil on canvas, 175 x 126 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 21.



Figure 104. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Second Floor, Lombard painters.

This photo was certainly taken before March 1941, as the painting by Giolfino, *Lucretia* (fig.63); was sold to Samuel Henry Kress on 13 March 1941. On the left side of the Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Birth of the Virgin*,(fig. 75); two panels by Boccaccio Boccaccino, *Saint Matthew and Saint John the Evangelist*, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 13; 14;





Figure 105. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Cimabue Room. Maestro della Cappella Velluti (ex Cimabue) *Madonna col Bambino in trono, due angeli e i santi Francesco e Domenico*, Andrea del Castagno *Madonna in trono col Bambino, i santi Giovanni battista e Girolamo, angeli e due fanciulli della famiglia Pazzi Castagno* (fig 132 ) on the left. The small panel is Paolo Veneziano, *Nascita di san Nicola*. All the works are now at the Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi collection, n. 32;2;

7.



Figure 106. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Second Floor. This photograph was taken before 1942, as the panel on the far left near the door by Masolino da Panicale, *Madonna of Humility* (tempera on panel Galleria degli Uffizi, n. 9962), was bought through Bellesi in 1930 and then sold to Goering in 1942. Other works: Agnolo Gaddi, *Madonna col Bambino e dieci angeli tra i santi Benedetto, Pietro, Giovanni Battista e Miniato*, tempera and gold on panel, cm 222 x 300 Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n. 29; Carlo Crivelli, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, oil on panel, 151.8x49.8cm, Chrysler Museum of Art; , Giovanni del Biondo, *Saint John the Baptist and Stories of his life*, Tempera and gold on panel, cm 275 x 180, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, n.27.





Figure 107. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence, foyer.



Figure 108. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence. Bartolomeo Vivarini, *Politych with Saint James Major, Madonna and Child and Saints*, tempera and gold on panel, 280x 214.9, J. Paul Getty Museum 71.PB.30, and the *Annunciation* by Domenico Morone (fig. ).



Figure 109. Photograph. Villa Vittoria, Florence



Figure 110. Villa Vittoria, Florence





Figure 111. Villa Vittoria, Florence, prior to 1941. On the left: Bernardino Licinio, *Reclining Nude* (sold to Goering in 1941) Galleria degli Uffizi, inv. 1890, inv. 9943), Paolo Veronese, *Saint Lucy with a Donor*, (fig. 143), Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo, *The Flute Player*, oil on canvas, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, Brescia; Paolo Veronese, *Portrait of Count della Porta and his son Adrian* (fig.26)



Figure 112. Jacometto Veneziano, *Ritratto di Giovane*, oil on canvas, 30x20,  
(Sotheby's Milan sale 9 June 2009, n. 15).



Figure 113. Villa Vittoria, Florence. On the left, Tintoretto, *The Siege of Asola*, (fig. 98); on the right, Ribera, *Portrait of Knight of Santiago* (fig.101); Murillo, *Portrait of a Member of the Ostigliani Family* (fig.23)

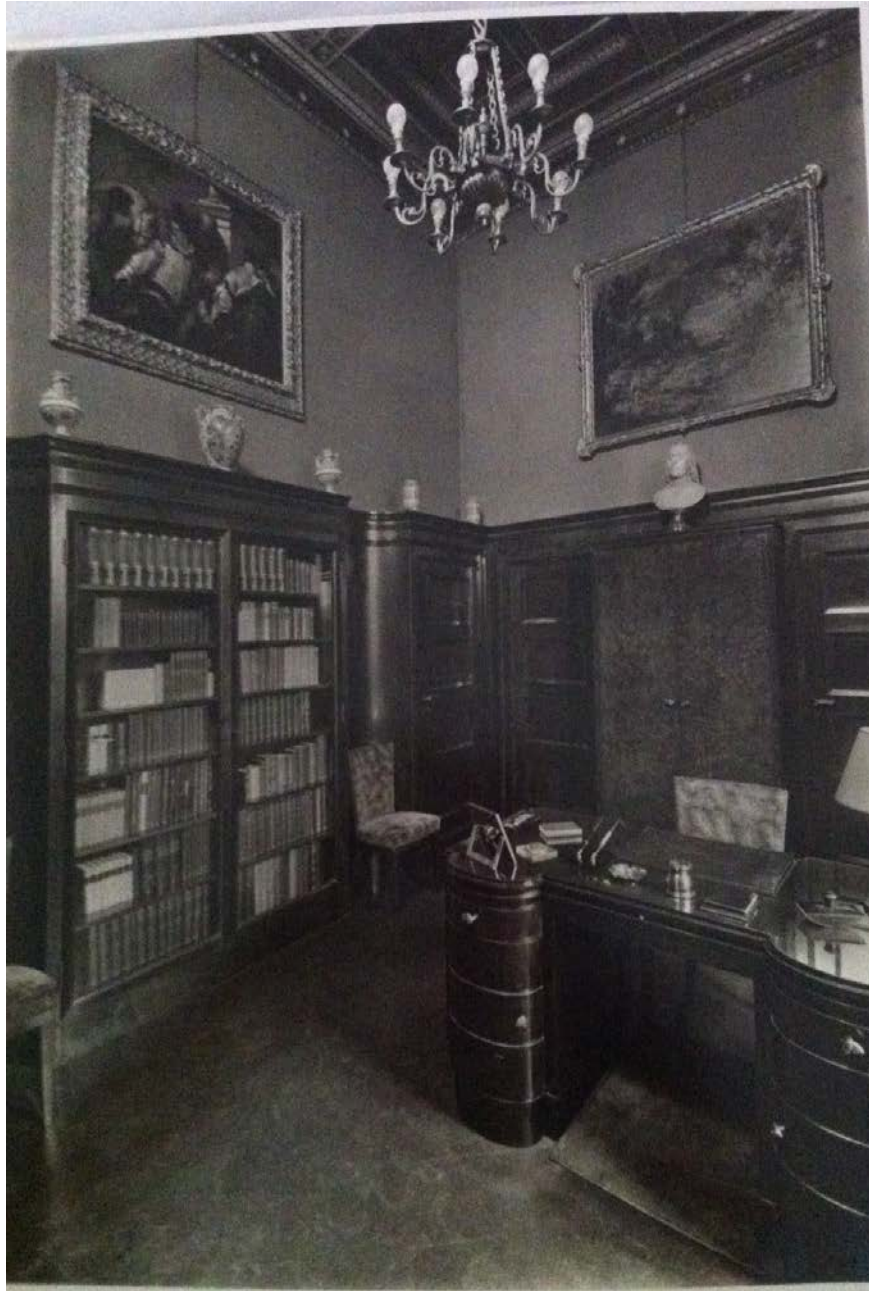


Figure 114. Photograph of Villa Vittoria. Interior. On the upper left, Giuseppe Bazzani, *The Departure of the Prodigal Son*, (ca. 1750), oil on canvas, 97.95 x 125.53 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Mo, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, F61-57.





Figure 115. Villa Vittoria, Florence, prior to 1935, when the Count sold the painting  
Piero di Cosimo, *Allegory*, to Samuel Henry Kress. National Gallery of Art  
Washington DC, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.160



Figure 116. Photograph of Samuel Henry Kress.



Figure 117. Samuel H. Kress apartment, New York. Vittore Carpaccio, *Prudence ad Temperance*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation; gift to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, in 1961, no. 58.36, 58.35.





Figure 118. Follower of Goya, *A Maja with Two Toreros*, oil on canvas, 72 1/8 x 39 3/8 in, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The Samuel H. Kress Collection, 61.57.



Figure 119. Cover of the catalogue for the Kress Travelling Exhibition.



Figure 120. Rosalba Carriera, *Portrait of Sir John Reade*, pastel, The National Gallery of Art, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.66.



Figure 121. Lorenzo Tiepolo, *Young Woman with a Parrot*, pastel, 66 x 52 cm, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, TX, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.1.48.





Figure 122. Pietro Longhi, *The Faint*, oil on canvas, 50 x 61.7 cm, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.63.





Figure 123. Giovan Battista Tiepolo, *Roman Matrons Making Offerings to Juno*, oil on canvas, 144.5 x 112.7 cm, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Gift of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 32.6.



Figure 124. Circle of Giorgione, *Venus and Cupid in a Landscape*, oil on panel, 11 x 20 cm , The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.142.



Figure 125. Photograph of the display of the Kress Exhibition, Gibbes Museum, Charleston, SC. venue in 1935,





Figure 126. Tanzio da Varallo, *Saint Sebastian*, oil on canvas, 117.3 x 93.7 , The National Gallery of Art, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.91.



Figure 127. Pensionante del Saraceni, *Still Life*, oil on canvas, 50.4 x 71.6 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Gift of Samuel Henry Kress, 1939.1.156.



Figure 128. Girolamo Boltraffio, *Portrait of the Poet Casio*, oil on panel, 51.5 x 37 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 28.



Figure 129. Niccolò dell'Abate, *Portrait of a Gentleman with a Falcon*, oil on canvas, 139.5 x 117.0, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 167.1991



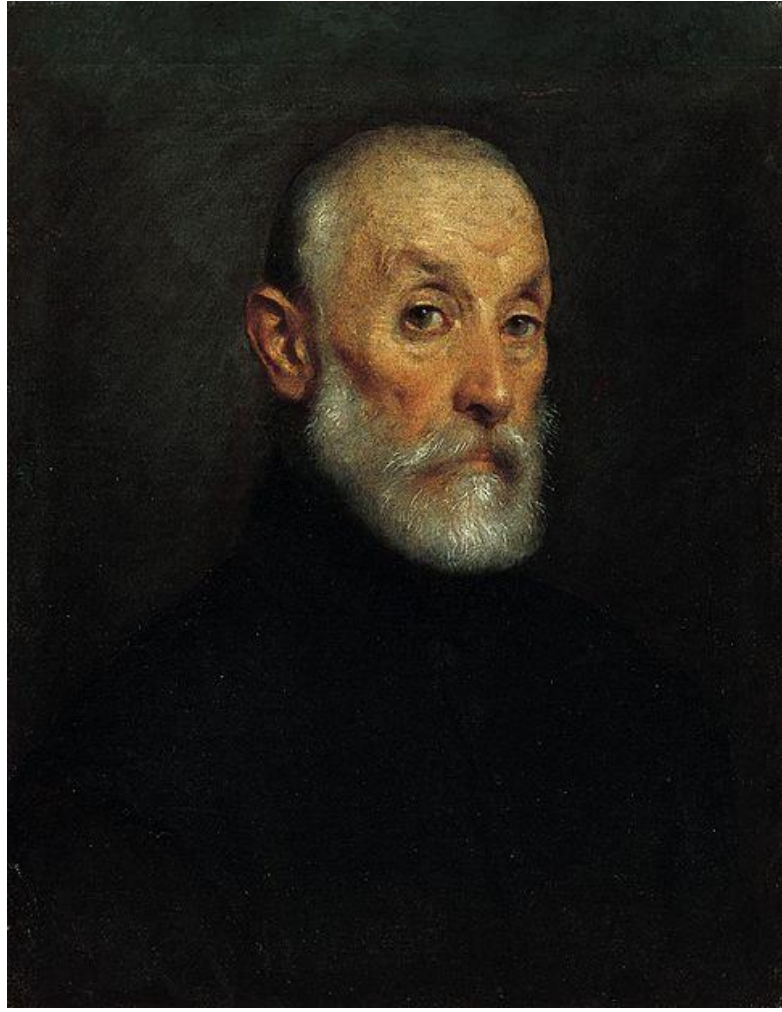


Figure 130. Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Portrait of an Old Man*, oil on canvas, The Norton Simon Foundation, F.1969.29.P.





Figure 131. Andrea del Castagno, *Madonna in trono col Bambino, i santi Giovanni battista e Girolamo, angeli e due fanciulli della famiglia Pazzi* (Affresco del Trebbio), detached fresco, 290 x 212 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonaocssi Collection,n. 2



Figure 132. Salvator Rosa, *Saint Peter*, oil on canvas, 126.2 x 98.2 cm, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation 1961.



Figure 133. Salvator Rosa, *Saint Simon the Apostle*, oil on canvas, 125.7 x 95.2 cm, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 61.1888.





Figure 134. Tuscan 13th Century, *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter, and Two Angels*, tempera on panel, 34.3 × 24.7 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington Dc, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 1952.5.60.



Figure 135. Master of the Straus Madonna, *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera and gold on panel, 34.5 x 27 cm. Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 61.161.





Figure 136. Adriobyzantine Master, *Madonna and Child*, tempera and gold on wood, 118.2 x 78.2 cm, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, TX, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 1961.1.1.



Figure 138. Elisabetta Sirani, *Head of Christ*, oil on canvas, 43.2 x 35.6, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, PR, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 62.0264.





Figure 139. Fra Vittore Ghislandi, *Portrait of a Young Man with a Turban*, oil on canvas, 139.7 x 101 cm, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, GL.60.17.54.





Figure 140. Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, oil on panel, 84.5 x 119.7 cm , The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 1961.9.86.



Figure 140. Carlo Dolci, *St. Paul the Hermit Fed by the Raven*, oil on canvas, 72.7 x 54.6 cm, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation.



Figure 142. Agnolo Bronzino, *Eleonora di Toledo*, oil on panel, 86.4 x 65.1 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, 1961.9.7.





Figure 143. Paolo Veronese, *Saint Lucy and a Donor*, oil on canvas, 180.6 x 115.3 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.48.



Figure 144. Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Elijah Fed by the Raven*, oil on panel, 168 x 135.6 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.9.35.





Figure 145. Titian, *Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos*, oil on canvas, 237.6 x 263 cm , The National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1957.14.6



Figure 146. Sassetta, *Madonna of the Snow Altarpiece*, Tempera and Gold on panel, 240x256, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection. 1.





Figure 147. Giovanni Bellini, *Saint Jerome in the Desert*, oil on panel, 145 x 114 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 25.





Figure 148. Lorenzo Lotto, *Susanna and the Elders*, oil on panel, 66 x 51 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi.



Figure 149. Bramantino (Bartolomeo Suardi), *Madonna with the Child and eight Saints*, tempera on panel, 203x167, Galleria degli Uffizi, Contini Bonacossi Collection, 3.



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## Appendix: List of Translations

The following translations of quotes in languages other than English are reported here for the convenience of the reader. All translations are my own.

### Footnote 53.

The *Antiquario* is like an alchemist, a mysterious figure that deals with an arcane and dark matter unclear to the common man. The *Antiquario* needs to be first an art lover, only then can he be an art dealer. With the word *antiquario* I mean anybody who is worthy of the name, dealers and collectors, since among them there is no one who is not a collector just as there is no collector who is not an antique dealer. The ultimate ambition for an art dealer is to bequest his own city of an art collection for which he can be remembered. Do you think that you can create a collection without carefully selecting the objects? The art collector becomes, by *force majeure*, a dealer. He buys, sells, barter. The vast majority of the *antiquari* are of humble origins, especially the best ones. We should judge the value of an *antiquario* by his stock, not by what he sold and does not own anymore. The main task of an *antiquario* is to groom a client that is to say to turn an ordinary person that has never bought a painting or a work of art in his life, into a tenacious fan of the Old Masters.

### Footnote 56.

Per buying volume, financial power and ability to regenerate the demand.

### Footnote 66.

The two scholars Roberto Longhi and August L. Mayer, authoritative authors of this catalogue, commended in their prefaces my career as a collector. And I am very grateful for this because it would have been difficult for me to achieve any higher results. I am aware that any form of praise extends to my family as well, even in the second edition of this catalogue that reiterates the success of this exhibition. I have to say that the merit goes in large part to my wife who, for many years and with rare

sensibility and love similar to a religious devotion, has supported my daily endeavor as a collector.

**Footnote 71.**

Another very characteristic magazine from the end of the last century was linked to this picturesque director, an Italian man one meter and ninety-five centimeters tall that one day appeared in Barcelona together with his wife and started trading stamps with the goal of accumulating a stock large enough to launch his own philatelic business. This gentleman, who soon became very well known in philatelic circles, was Alessandro Contini. He rented a place in Conde del Asalto Street where he established himself as a professional dealer in 1898. The year after he started publishing *España Filatelica*, a magazine of eleven editions, offering a great selection of texts, beautifully printed with catchy advertising.

**Footnote 84.**

From the catalogue” Labrada Fernando. Born in Periana (Malaga) in 1888. Died in Madrid in 1977. He started his education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Malaga. In 1909 he moved to Rome thanks to a government pension. In 1913 he settled down in Madrid where he became professor at the Academy of Fine Arts joining the Royal Academy of Arts in 1936. He exhibited his works not only in Spain, but also in France, Italy and Germany, winning numerous medals”. Oil on canvas, *Vittoria Erminia Contini Bonacossi*.

**Footnote 87.**

A passionate private amateur, who was proud of owning a gallery of considerable importance where all the pictorial schools are represented”.

**Footnote 96**

How can I disentangle my business? I do not even dare to present my paintings to the Brera, as I am sure they will create problems, they will deny me the export license without Rome’s permission. We have here a supervisor [Modigliani] that enforces this law of a socialist government in the most hideously exaggerated manner”.

**Footnote 99.**

Certainly Rome does not lack foreign buyers.

**Footnote 100.**

The law (1902) did not arouse any concerns in dealers' and collectors' circles which were long used to approaching the request of an export license for paintings and art objects as a mere formality as well as to eluding border controls, which were otherwise non-existent.

**Footnote 103.**

When Adolfo Venturi and his then small staff of the General Directorate of Fine Arts decided to create a National Gallery of Art, the goal was to establish a few museological institutions in Rome with a national and relevant scope. This program was part of the post-risorgimento process, strengthened by the conquest of Rome, which aimed to build the ideological background for a national culture proper of the newly unified Italy [...]. Venturi realized that the newly opened National Gallery of Art in the Corsini Palace unevenly leaned towards the Baroque era, a period of Italian art at the time still little explored. It was thus impossible to see the Corsini Gallery as a manual of Italian Art. So, it is not by chance that the project of creating a Museum of the Middle Ages and Renaissance was already in place in 1900 and that it was then finalized by Federico Hermanin first in Castel Sant'Angelo and then in Palazzo Venezia.

**Footnote 104.**

At the time of the Unification of the country, Rome was the only city without government- managed museums. Unlike other cities of the kingdom, where the government inherited cultural instructions from the pre-unification governments, in the Capital City museums were under the jurisdiction of the Pope with the Vatican Museums, and the Capitoline Museums under the city government.

Inventories of works of art, assessing their conservation status, creating new and modern catalogues, reinstallation of galleries collections: this was a complete program that intended to transform the museum into an illustrated book of the history

of art of the Nation. Venturi's proposal was associated with the request of introducing the teaching of art history at the University level, with the goal of educating the first generation of art historians to put in charge of museums.

**Footnote 109.**

Documents of everyday life next to masterpieces, as in a big painting where it is possible to observe the whole development of our people's lives after the Roman period.

**Footnote 110.**

To place the object in a plausible context.

**Footnote 113.**

For a while now in Rome, or better, in Italy people have been talking about the Count Contini Bonacossi art collection, which they assembled by means of impressive financial resources, an extraordinary art collection comprised of astonishing masterpieces from all centuries and countries. Tonight the rooms of their villa were opened for a large numbers of guests. The lucky owners welcome their guests with generous cordiality. The lively and stocky Countess Vittoria every now and then looks up at her gigantic husband, dignified and reserved as a court gentleman ("See? I reach my Nano's heart", she says) [...]. They say that even though she did not receive any specialized training, she is gifted with a formidable intuition that allows her to identify valuable works of art and with a bold courage to buy them. Meanwhile, as an act of devotion and gratitude towards the masters, she requests a mass in memory of every artist in their collection. A little further up, Longhi's black haired head, only apparently short-sighted and distracted, but in fact attentive and beady-eyed, stands out.

**Footnote 114.**

In the last two weeks I stocked up on some very interesting things [...]. As you can see I steadily and bravely hold on to realizing my dream of transforming my

collection into something unique and worthwhile in Europe, at least within the private sphere.

**Footnote 120.**

“Italian Star”; “We are more respected now that we have Mussolini”.

**Footnote 123.**

We are going to America with a special assignment by our Government and we will take advantage of our sojourn to study public and private collections that we still do not know.

**Footnote 128.**

He reclaimed vast lands he owned, establishing hygienic homesteads and planting vineyards. He donated important Italian works of art to the Italian State and bought back numerous other Italian masterpieces of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento exported abroad at the beginning of the last century and now back as part of our cultural heritage.

**Footnote 130.**

With this [trip], I have come here five times, the first time thirty years ago, another time six years ago, three years ago, last year, and now. We went to Argentina for the first time twenty-four years ago, two roundtrips in eleven months; we are also familiar with Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Santa Fe, and other small towns. In Brazil as well, Rio de Janeiro, San Paulo, Santos, we have even been to Uruguay. We travelled a lot, out of the countries in Central Europe, we lack Russia.

**Footnote 143.**

The house expresses the resident’s needs, taste, desires; and the works of art that structure the spaces serve as enhancers of its role: the house is an organic organism that breaths and moves according to the beat of human life, it intensifies it, it complements it.

**Footnote 144.**

Perhaps the secret of the Contini Bonacossi Collection at Villa Vittoria consisted in the display criteria of its masterpieces in a *gemütlich*, luxurious but comfortable atmosphere, in rooms kept in perfect order and decorated with arrangements of flowers....to the owners' credit is the knowledge of how to use the spaces to display paintings, sculptures and furniture to a level of excellence that few museums can claim. The lights were perfect, the spaces were right, the colors of the walls were pitch-perfect, the frames were beautiful, with an original accent, of unmistakable and scrupulous taste and quiet formality.

**Footnote 146.**

We need to go back to the context of that time if we want to fully comprehend how standing up to German power was anything but easy, especially for someone in the spotlight.

**Footnote 148.**

Already by the winter of 1942, when Reich Marshal Goering arrived in Florence he was welcomed with honors and gifts by the most important and well known *antiquari*. Once most anti-fascist dealers that had seen their business with their anglo-saxon clientele collapse, all of a sudden they became German sympathizers and took on SS officers' commissions.

**Footnote 151.**

In 1941, one of Reich Marshal Goering's representatives approached me and asked me to hand over some of my art objects. I kept rejecting his request for over a year, but after the Reich Marshal's trip to Rome, the pressure became coercive and I was left with no choice but to concede as little as possible, and in every case the least significant objects from my collection. Moreover, the paintings I gave him were bought abroad and were subject to a temporary import license: they were not part of Italian patrimony and therefore their surrender did not represent an alienation of Italy's cultural heritage.

**Footnote 173.**

Professor Longhi informs me that you are willing to buy the two Spanzotti. I can give them to you separately as well, at the price Professor Longhi has indicated of eighty thousand liras, excluding the shipping, packing and eventual taxes. Prof. Longhi mentions the laws that regulate the transfer of property of works of art that have been included in the national inventory. These works of art are private property and as far as I know they haven't been catalogued, unless they acquired this status as a consequence of their exhibition in Turin.

**Footnote 176.**

Dear Reverend,

I am willing to buy the little triptych if you agree to the sum of 125.000 liras. The Reverend that brought me the two panels had the chance to see the photographs of important works of art by the same master that I already owned. Your painting therefore won't represent any vital addition to my collection. I must add that I was persuaded to offer you this sum only by reason of the sale because, to be honest, the intrinsic value of the painting is less than 100.000 liras. In any case, if you decide to accept my offer, I appreciate it if you can give me the painting without any delay, as I am about to leave at any moment and I will be away for an extended period of time.

**Footnote 183.**

I have known Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi for over thirty years. He lived for long periods of time in the United States where he contributed to the formation of many important art collections. Simultaneously, he put together his private collection, primarily constituted by works of art taken abroad many years ago and that thanks to his purchases came back to Italy. According to my opinion, his collection has to be regarded as one of the most important collections in Europe. During our discussions, Count Contini Bonacossi always expressed his sympathy for the United States deprecating the Italian alliance with Germany as well as the declaration of war with the Allied Forces as a tragic error.



**Footnote 184.**

I declare that when Marshal Goering's emissaries started approaching Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi asking him to hand over paintings from his collection, he contacted me asking if it would be possible to notify his collection as a whole or if there was a legal way to make it inalienable. I replied that this was not possible due to lack of time, given the complexity and the volume of the collection. I also must declare that since the first time I met Senator Contini Bonacossi, he has been telling me about his intention to donate his collection to the Nation. With this goal, he intentionally bought important objects that were not allowed to be exported, as in the case of the famous Sassetta [fig. 146] altarpiece, deemed not exportable by the Ministry. It was the Count Contini Bonacossi himself who urged the work to be catalogued, which in fact happened.

**Footnote 185.**

On the first anniversary of the liberation of Florence, my wife and I would like to reiterate to you our firm intention of donating our art gallery to the city of Florence. We started collecting abroad, roughly thirty years ago, and we have been buying in Italy but more widely abroad, always with the intention of offering it eventually to this illustrious city, our adopted home. We would also be disposed to donate our Villa that houses the collection, together with the park that surrounds it, reserving the partial use for myself and my family. We would like to accomplish this according to specific agreements and regulations that will be put in place at the given time. Until the donation is formalized, I kindly ask you to keep this confidential, without making our intentions public knowledge or informing the press.

**Footnote 186.**

There is something that troubles me and that is the fact that I might leave this earth before seeing my husband's and my desire to turn our art collection into an inseparable whole in the care of the Italian Government or the city of Florence, making it the subject of ongoing admiration for the people that will come after us. The thought that our collection, the fruit of years of our common efforts where the most celebrated artists live together in harmony, could be separated, destroyed or

diminished, distresses me. My dear Nano, my children, in the case that we are not able to accomplish this, please, find a way, I beg you, to make possible that the Vittoria and Alessandro Contini Bonacossi Collection will survive and live forever. Because this is the ultimate wish I yearn for, not for any material desires, but for a higher idea of my soul. The masterpieces that we collected together, my husband and I, starting from scratch, shall become an ensemble for the spiritual enrichment of the citizens of Florence and all the people that shall see them. They shall be a wonderful source for knowledge and for lifting the spirits. Not for myself, but for the good of humanity”.

**Footnote 187.**

As far as concerns the art gallery housed in the palace in Pratello Orsini [Villa Vittoria], I want to reiterate here what my beloved wife wrote in her moral will [...]. I write this will in a hurry as tomorrow I have to leave for America. It might sound dry and schematic and I would have loved to add a moral will, but I do not have time to do it.

**Footnote 190.**

In painting Cimabue thought that he should hold the field, now Giotto has the cry, so that the other's fame is growing dim.

**Footnote 196.**

I was barely thirty years old when I first met Dr. Bode, the director of German museums thanks to Ferroni. He brought him over to my studio and I still remember the kind words that the German had for me when he realized how nervous I was. It might sound a little strange, but you would have to have lived during that era to understand what Bode represented at the time. Indeed, Bode was then the most authoritative expert of Italian art in the world. He did not brag about it. He was an easy and accessible man, willing to admit his own mistakes. He dressed formally and modestly. In 1914 I had bought two big canvases that I had attributed to Strozzi. Longhi was still not even on the horizon to be consulted regarding the attribution of a Seicento painting. Dr. Bode observed the paintings for a long time [...]. “yes, the

more I look at them, the more they look like Strozzi to me [...] despite the tone clash, they are definitely two works by Strozzi”.

**Footnote 198.**

Sir,

I must first apologize if I dare to address you without having the honor of knowing you very well. But I have been encouraged by friends who have assured me that you do not disdain to put your high competence at the service of those who wish to know your opinion. I am a passionate private art enthusiast and I have a fairly large gallery in which all pictorial schools are represented. A few days ago I bought from Dr. Paolini a portrait by Van Dyck representing *The Old Christopher Vanderford*. The seller has sent me a letter in which you state that after examining the photographs you did not hesitate to assign the painting in question to Antoine Van Dyck. [...] I take the opportunity to tell you that in my gallery the Flemish and Dutch schools are well represented and that I have pretty things from Jordaens, Breughel, Teniers, Ostade, Steen, Snyders, Hobbema, etc.. Since I know that these schools interest you I would be flattered if on your next trip to Rome, I could have the opportunity to show you my paintings. Although I do not trade at all, if there is anything that interests you particularly for your museums I will do my best to please you. In the hope of hearing back from you, I renew my gratitude and please accept the expression of my highest esteem.

**Footnote 200.**

I am very sorry that during your recent trip to Rome I was not given the honor of a visit. My good friend Dr. Longhi told me that you expressed the desire to see my collection [...] I take the opportunity to ask you for a favor. A few days ago I bought from Mr. Sedelmeyer of Paris several paintings including the enclosed this Rembrandt from his early years. Mr. Sedelmeyer showed me one of your letters where you said you would enclose it in his next work. Would you like to send me a letter addressed directly to me confirming your opinion about the picture? [...] For obvious reasons I would like to ask you to omit the provenance of the painting. [...] I take this opportunity to submit for your opinion a little portrait with an allegorical

figure attributed to Martin de Vos and an *Ecce Homo* attributed to the Master of the Virgin among the Virgins

**Footnote 202.**

2 December 1926

The ocean is beautiful, we have made some new acquaintances, an American painter (and his wife) who owns a villa in Tuscany and is a celebrity, Roethaven, and a lady decorated for being in war and for setting up various institutions for blind people, in Rome, it is housed in Via Quattro Fontane, and I will gladly contribute to her great work on my return. The lady has written several books and will dedicate some of them to me. Her name is [missing in the text] Now she has been married for four years and her husband is one of Mr. Mather's brothers, who knows us and came to visit our beautiful gallery, indeed Dad gave him a picture for his Museum at Princeton University. I realize more and more how small the world is.

**Footnote 206.**

I received your review when I was about to leave for Lucerne, where I had an appointment with Lulu Böhler and Heinemann. Your memory succeeds in giving a perfect and exact synthesis of my collection which no other text could have achieved. [...] My trip to Lucerne was very profitable for my collection. I bought from Heinemann a nice portrait of Goya of the middle period, and from the nice Lulu Böhler a beautiful portrait of Van Dyck from the Genoese period, of which you rightly pointed out the lack of this kind of work in my collection, another portrait of Goya, a magnificent Paolo Veronese and 'last but not the least' a beautiful Rembrandt *Judas who brings back the silver coins*. [...]. This picture struck me as soon as I saw it unlike the painting on canvas of the same subject that is in the collection of Baron von Schikler of Paris. When I later learned that you rightly considered it the original of the two, I did not hesitate for a moment to buy it and I am proud of it. For the *Judah* I would like to kindly ask you if you could send me a letter in which you confirm your attribution.

**Footnote 209.**

Mr. Bloch visited us yesterday and delivered good news about you. Mr. B. tells me you asked him to look for a fine work by Crespi for your museum. By pure chance, I recently bought a gem by the Master with a Russian provenance, highly recommended by my good friend Longhi. It is something exceptional, way better than Chardin! I would love for Crespi, an interesting Master, to be represented in Berlin. Desiring to do something to please you, I decided to offer it to your museum. I will ship the painting this week. I am sure you will be fully pleased with it.

I take this opportunity to ask you for a new favor. I enclose photographs of three of my most important paintings for which I would urge your expertise. As you can see, the photographs are really excellent and can give you a very clear vision of what the originals look like. In addition, I enclose copies of Longhi's, Gronau's etc. descriptions that will give you every detail about color, etc etc ... Even Suida, Venturi, Mayer, have seen the paintings and have written enthusiastically, but I do not have time to make a copy of these ones. I do not require a lengthy text; I just need a few lines in the form of a letter that can summarize their great importance. Naturally, for obvious reasons, you should not mention the fact that you did not see the originals, but on the other hand Longhi, Gronau, Hadeln take full responsibility for their statements about the quality and status of the paintings.

**Footnote 216.**

Longhi's transformation from being a critic influenced by Croce to being a connoisseur of European fame was concluded during the years 1920-1922, thanks to his trip around Europe (where he studied paintings displayed in storages of every single museum, small or large, in Spain, France and Germany in depth), a journey undertaken with the collector Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, for whom he worked as a consultant in the acquisition of works of art.

**Footnote 217.**

Longhi's work during the twenties and thirties is deeply different from the work of his younger years. It appears to be consistent in its entirety with the tactics of the

connoisseur concerned about the illegitimate appropriation by academics of his own discoveries and eager to reaffirm his professional prestige at every step: most of Longhi's writings of this period are indeed inspired by the discovery of a work, an unpublished work, a clarification of authorship.

**Footnote 219.**

This is to clarify the apparent absence of two years from the end of the first volume [1922], which upon returning from my journey of exploration (excluding England which I visited later) I already gave two reports at the time, with a 'fictive' essay on Italian paintings in Pommersfelden and with the annotations in the margins of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries exhibition of 1922 at the Palazzo Pitti. The following interruption, until 1925, is induced by my long work at home dedicated to filing the travel notes, which were the starting points for many essays in this volume. A first reflection is in fact already printed in the preface to the catalog of Braunschweig where the Director Fleischig, in 1922, advised that the reorganization of the Italian works was based on information given to him by me. But the same may be true for many other cases: for example, for Domenico Veneziano exhibited in Monaco in 1921. Catalogue entries collected at the Prado (summer 1920) influenced the essay on Titian and Assereto; a visit to Orleans in September 1920, with the discovery of a young Velazquez, concluded with the essay on Italo-Spanish conjunctions between the sixteenth and seventeenth century in 1927. During the same year, Chambéry gave me the beginnings for the "Essay on the Italians in France" (1927) which includes, among other things, a portrait of Paolo Uccello; the Prado again and also Nantes, Pau, Braunschweig, Hannover, Berlin, Budapest (1920-22) gave me catalogue entries for Assereto, those for Ter Brugghen were provided by Paris, Le Havre, from Cassel, from Pommersfelden from Vienna. Aix-en-Provence and Rouen (1920.1921) allowing me to solve the problem that, in 1923, would end with the name of Gaspare Traversi [...]. There is, in short, almost no essay in this volume that is not already in nuce in my files and notes of 1920 -1922.

**Footnote 222.**

That sublime *Rest from the Flight to Egypt* that was engraved by Van Vessel in the Leopold Wilhelm Gallery and that I have recently found in an Italian private collection where I had the chance to identify it, will have his rightful place in my next book on the complete activity of the Master.

**Footnote 224.**

The diaspora of Italian art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was almost all to be rediscovered. To accomplish this, you did not need books, but travelling to museums and dealers across Europe. The opportunity of my own 'Grand Tour' was offered to me in the years 1920-1922. It was a great trip which took me from Spain to France, through Central Europe all the way to Hungary [...] the memories of this long study journey I still like to use especially for anything dealing with the seventeenth century.

**Footnote 250.**

31 March, 1940

The shipper Ciolli from Florence requested an export license for a panel by Raffaellino del Garboon behalf of Senator Count Alessandro Contini Bonacossi, declaring its value of one hundred thousand lire. The painting was once on the altar of the Corsini Chapel in the cloister of Santo Spirito; [...] the owners of the Chapel withdrew it from there in 1875 and displayed it in their Galleria Corsini in the Palazzo di Parione (Florence). After the death of Senator Prince Don Tommaso Corsini and the division of the family estate, the panel was allocated to Countess Beatrice Pandolfini, and was noted as of important cultural interest by the Italian government on September 19, 1927. **Countess Pandolfini sold it a few months ago to Senator Conte Contini to whom the notice was renewed on December 26, 1939.** [...] This Sovrintendenza (Florence) does not believe that the importance of the painting can justify the imposition of the export ban in accordance with Article 35 of the law of 1 June 1939 n. 1089, nor does it intend to exercise the right of first refusal. Since this is a work of art whose particularly important interest has been regularly

notified to the owner, the request for export is referred to the decision of this Ministry.

**Footnote 261.**

Rome, 4 December 1924

My trip to Luzerne turned out to be very profitable. I bought from Heinemann a nice little Goya portrait from his middle period.

**Footnote 275.**

Rome, 15 February 1925[...] Lulu Böhler visited me briefly, but enough to allow me to buy from him a beautiful picture by El Greco, the third of my collection, and it is not unlikely that I will add a fourth one. Böhler was very impressed with the quality of my objects, as you had very kindly already informed him. [...] Longhi has started work seriously as you can see from his latest articles on *L'Arte*, in which he describes my Domenico Veneziano and my four new Titians. Soon he will write an article about you as well.

**Footnote 278.**

13 January 1927, New York City

Today we visited three dealers: Mr. Steinmeyer, Mr. Knoedler&Co. and the last one Durlacher& Bros. From the first one we bought a nice Savoldo and a nice Dosso Dossi, the second one has two or three paintings that interest us, we will see tomorrow.

**Footnote 283.**

11 January 1927

Time 24:00. We visited a dealer from here, Mr. Kleinberger, but he has nothing for us (thank God).



**Footnote 284.**

10 February 1927, New York

Time 9.30. My dearest, Dad is in the other room looking at a nice little portrait and at another portrait of a Lady with her daughter by Cornelius de Vos that we bought at very favorable conditions.

**Footnote 288.**

24 February 1927 New York

I am exhausted, Dad is dropping by at Kleinberger's, he gave him the Velazquez on commission (he said he has a client for it, let's hope).

**Footnote 292.**

28 January 1927, Detroit

Colin Agnew our painting...*Madonna with the Child and Little Saint John* by Antonello da Messina [fig. 140]. I think it is Berenson that does not believe it as being a work by Antonello da Messina, he will be seething with rage and so will Duveen (whom we did not want to meet). Here they are both treated as egoists who badmouth people; they do not want anybody else to succeed. Nobody doubts their skill of being one a businessman the other a connoisseur, but you need to be human. We are the ones who keep the highest standards in the arts, our clients completely trust our opinion and taste and they do not need either one of them.

**Footnote 294.**

1 March 1927, New York

We reinvigorated ourselves at Alfredo's. After breakfast, we went to Colin Agnew's. We took as proof of ourselves a beautiful half-length female nude, extraordinary, by Giovanni Bellini... But hush, eh! Do not talk about it, I can't keep quiet because I am shivering for happiness, let's hope to arrange an exchange and a little bit of cash. We also saw a beautiful portrait by Ribera, worthy of Velazquez that I would love to have, Dad put in an offer...we are waiting for a reply. My God! How emotional I get

in front of these beautiful things. Dad then had to receive a gentleman? And I went with Kusterer to the museum to study a little. Then we took a walk back to the hotel.

**Footnote 304.**

15 April 1929

After Kress's visit (already during it) Federico and I went to the Museum [Metropolitan] where there are seven or more paintings that once belonged to us, the Antonello da Messina, the Tondo by Andrea del Sarto, Van Der Kauter (the big peacock with animals and fruits), a number of Primitives, the first was bought by the Museum, the others are Kress's gifts.

**Footnote 312.**

5 March 1927, New York

We have been to the Knoedlers to look at two Goyas, a nice Head of Bullfighter and a Lady, perhaps we will have them in exchange (he was the one who gave us the Botticelli!).

**Footnote 315.**

7 April 1927

Time 19.10. I am coming in right now. This morning after breakfast we went to Mr. Knoedler's, as he has a Goya that Dad likes. I'm holding back, but Dad wants it. Tomorrow we will know if we can make an exchange, my hopes are low, they want money.

**Footnote 316.**

5 March 1927

Dad and I went to the American Art to look again at the paintings that we bought the previous evening. Dad was furious because he thought he had overpaid for them (I suggested buying them and he did not see them), but when he saw the beautiful Florentine boy in a silk dress with fur, he calmed down, then the two Magnasco came

to day light and they are magnificent, but he did not tell me *brava*. Talking about the paintings (with Knoedler), we told him we bought two Magnasco and he immediately replied that he had two as well (let me see them) he goes looking for them...and they were the same that we had bought and he paid more than we did.

**Footnote 319.**

5 June 1929

12:15. Dad is in the other room with Mr. Messmore from the Knoedler Firm, he is showing him the British paintings proposing to exchange them for an El Greco and a Murillo. We are not very much interested in this kind of art, we prefer, if possible, El Greco and Murillo.

**Footnote 358.**

5 January 1927

Emotional day! We are about to conclude a deal, which we have been working on for a month, now yes, then no! This morning Mr. Sachs came here together with another Professor Forbes. To check the restoration, they use X rays. They found the Lorenzetti to be in perfect condition.

**Footnote 362.**

At the Fogg Museum: not very nice, because they are about to move into the new building in the month of June. We have visited first the old building and I will mention only a few important pieces that I saw there. In the entrance there are two Romanesque griffes (which we were supposed to buy from Romano in Florence), three or four very interesting Greek nudes (ruins). On the 1st floor: a Romanesque capitello and a head of King idem. The Botticelli and the extraordinary triptych by Pietro Lorenzetti that we sold to Mr. Warburg are on public display. Sorry if my writing is bad, but I'm tired and there is a lot of confusion in my head for what I saw. It's too much to memorize everything in a few hours, do you not think? So to summarise: a beautiful head of Palma il Vecchio, one Carlo Crivelli (very well restored by Cavenaghi), 1 friar by Lorenzo Lotto, 1 Ribera, triptych of Taddeo

Daddi, an Annunciation by Andrea Vanni, a Cosimo Tura, a beautiful Sassetta, a good Morone, a Fra Angelico, the portrait of Dante and Virgilio by Giovanni da Ponte interesting for the subjects. Other important paintings. Director Sachs's daughter took us to see the new museum, a building in Italian style, a large courtyard columns and arcades all in travertine, they copied a famous cloister that is located in Montepulciano (Tuscany). It is very beautiful and well divided, on the wall a neutral wallpaper, bed area in marble, windows beautiful for light (but empty for now). The young lady told us that they have a lot of works in storage to put on display in the new museum, so we understand that the old one is less well endowed. This museum too (like all the others in the US) serves for an art school, for study, but only for males, although there is another one open to women as well. The Fogg Museum, in the center of the University, was given to Mr. Fogg by his wife before dying, he being an art scholar. Boston universities are the most renowned in America (even more than Columbia in New York). Boston is called the "intellectual city of America".

**Footnote 369.**

16 March 1927

Yesterday Mr. Holmes and his wife came to visit us. They are thinking about the Lotto and Velazquez, they expect us in Boston, and we may leave Saturday night or Sunday for a couple of days and we will bring both paintings with us.

**Footnote 370.**

21 March 1927

I have got to run because at 10:30 Mr. Holmes is coming to pick us up to go to the Museum, where he serves as Director for life and his mother (now seriously ill, poor woman) is considered the founder of the museum.

**Footnote 381.**

15 January 1927

This morning Mr. Taylor will come for a visit, he is the one who has our Mayo and the Bronzino.

**Footnote 382.**

7 January 1927

Today we visited Mr. and Mrs. Taylor's house, together with the Samuels. There are nice tapestries, enormous spaces for New York, bric à brac furniture, the Spanish are dominant, among the good things they have, our Goya El Majo (damn it! You have inside all the rats of Spain). The beautiful boy standing dressed in white by Bronzino, also from us. He does not have many paintings, so let's hope he buys some!

**Footnote 385.**

13 March 1927

As soon as we got home, I had to get dressed again to go get Mr. Kress and take him to the Guggenheims. We just came back, the Guggenheims gave Kress a boost of confidence speaking very highly about our stock and our reliability and professionalism, so then the new collector felt reassured

**Footnote 394.**

30 January 1927

In the Detroit Museum there are some of our paintings: a magnificent Masolino, gold panel, the Father with Christ on the Cross, one Cima, The Annunciation, a predella that is believed to be by Perugino (I believe it is by Raphael) two small saints by Amadeo (donated by us), two cassoni, one side board, one sculpture Madonna and Child by Nino Pisano or its school, I think that is all.

**Footnote 407.**

Riccardo Gualino's art collection is not only the hedonistic results of spare moments away from business, it is not only the reflection of a sophisticated and refined taste, and it is also an initiative that will have a great impact on the Italian cultural scene.

**Footnote 421.**

The Bagatti and Valsecchi artistic complex in Milan represents an example that is set to spread the idea of the Renaissance in vogue during the nineteenth century through collections of art specifically bought to furnish the household [...]. A model chosen as such by a diverse range of critics and entrepreneurs who had sensed the potential of this exceptional home to represent [...] the qualities recognized since the end of the nineteenth century of the Renaissance in domestic interiors: beauty, harmony, dignity. [...] And it is for the large group of the 'new princes', eager to surround themselves with collections inspired by the treasures of ancient families, used now in a modern way by the middle classes to furnish the house, which the Bagatti Valsecchi proposes as a model of great taste.

**Footnote 423.**

Museum studies are neglected in Italy because our art collections are housed in old buildings bearing artistic and cultural value, it is difficult and useless to take into consideration the most recent criteria that are being developed.

**Footnote 425.**

The work of art, be it a vase by a Greek craftsman or the Sistine ceiling, is always an exquisitely 'relative' masterpiece. The work of art never stands alone, it always relates to something. To begin with: it relates at least to another work of art. A work of art that stands alone in the world won't even be considered as a product of a human being, instead it will be regarded with reverence or horror, as a trick, as a taboo, as God's work or a sorcerer's.

**Footnote 428.**

My dear Doctor,

Your departure left a void in our house as we are now getting used to your candid, cordial and very pleasant company [...]. We hope to have you back with us soon for

a longer visit. I have to thank you for your appreciation of my collection. Your opinion means more than you know and it will serve as an incentive for me to perfect it even more. In order to facilitate your work of reviewing my collection as you promised, I went ahead and drew up the following lists.

**Footnote 464.**

A long-time friend of Spanish painting, which he familiarized himself with in situ a long time ago, Count Contini Bonacossi understood, in putting together a collection that is nowadays considered one of the most important private collections of Italian art, how important it was to include in it examples from our natural sister pictorial school, the Spanish school: from the Venetians to El Greco and Velazquez, from Caravaggio to Zurbaran, from Tiepolo to Goya [...] it seemed then obvious to highlight directly the area [of the collection] that is newer to the Italian public, therefore, more fruitful.

**Footnote 475.**

28 January 1927

Thank God, now we own everything we have. But we started out with 8 million in debts. Ok, we had the paintings, but you need money to pay, don't you agree?

**Footnote 482.**

For a while now in Rome, or better, in Italy people have been talking about the Count Contini Bonacossi art collection gathered thanks to impressive financial resources. They put together an extraordinary art collection comprised of astonishing masterpieces from all centuries and countries. Tonight the rooms of the villa have been opened to a large numbers of guests.

**Footnote 483.**

New princes of wealth, of culture, with entrepreneurial skills, political opportunities, strategy of the new patriciate. The new princes, treasures of antique aristocratic families now used in a modern way, model of refined taste.

**Footnote 515.**

1932: July in Rome. Kress has arrived. 21 October 1932: Nano leaves with Kress for Chebourg; 22 September 1934: We went to Mantova for the inauguration of the restoration works Kress paid for Palazzo Ducale. We leave from Bologna with Kress; 15 June 1935 New York. We are boarding on the Rex at 11 and our dear Kress and Miss Kilvert are with us; 2 August 1936: My Nano leaves for Munich in Bavaria to keep Kress company; 25 September 1936: Nano with Kress and the two ladies at the Hotel Excelsior [Florence]. Kress leaves, we arrive in Paris. The Volterras keep going for London, we go to the Hotel Meurice, Nano stays with Kress at the Louvre with Professor Meyer; 18 October 1936 Kress leaves for America; 12 October 1937: All [Kress and Contini Bonacossi] at the Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli, for the El Greco exhibition (where we loaned 6 of our paintings by El Greco).

**Footnote 516.**

15 March 1927

Dad went over to Kress, always trying to convince the old multimillionaire that after making all this money through his hard work, he now must make a name for himself as an art collector and art enthusiast...and he starts feeling the bug and talking about giving a painting to the Museum [Metropolitan Museum of Art]. From this point of view Americans are extraordinary, what do they give to their country! It is moving. And we will do the same...we will make a gift to Castel Sant'Angelo that will give us honor for centuries.

**Footnote 518.**

10 February 1927

So, I wanted to tell you about yesterday. The first visit was to Miss Kilvert who already bought some furniture from us, a Florentine table, and a brazier from San Lorenzo. She called us for some decorating advice for one of her friends' apartment, Mr. Kress. So we suggested moving cassoni, chandeliers, I removed a lot of extra



stuff sitting on a mantel. And there are no paintings, so we hope to manage some deals.

**Footnote 519.**

Dad now can't go by himself; I think he is a little nervous, considering these struggles...but struggles that we overcome. Today he closed a nice deal with Kress, so we have now the honor of creating a collector; he only has paintings from us. I hope that he will buy also the other two that we left with him to consider...and I also hope in future deals.

**Footnote 521.**

I went to the United States to study many Italian paintings. Works of art that were never published in scholarly publications or catalogues, some hardly accessible, some poorly reproduced and badly catalogued, but also very well-known artworks both to scholars and to the general public. Despite all the errors and the misleading information, the choice of those artworks reveals a specific taste distinct from Europe for its preference for Medieval art. Indeed, there are a number of American collections specialized in Medieval Italian Art in the United States, while there are few in Europe. And even in museums, Medieval artworks have a bigger presence than in Europe.

**Footnote 524.**

5 March 1927

Again at Kress's house, a client created by dad, we brought over another Primitive, and we hope...we stayed there for hours and hours...you need a lot of patience [...]. I am exhausted; we just came back from Kress, where we rearranged his sitting room at least ten times...two or more hours standing. He then [Kress] took us home, he gave us some fresh fruit and this morning he sent me beautiful flowers. The other day he sent us some Bordeaux wine, one bottle of Champagne, two bottles of whisky, and I will end up selling it because I do not drink liquor. We hope to make another deal, it will be a great accomplishment, because he is a new client, created by us, all of his paintings are from us.

**Footnote 529.**

After all, one needs to keep in mind that in the last thirty years the international art market has been focusing on the United States and that the rediscoveries of then unknown masterpieces all happened in the U.S.