

quod nimium gentilitatis amatores essemus, cum nemo eo huius rei studiosior esset, quippe qui et statuas veterum undique ex tota Urbe conquisitas, in suas illas aedes, quas sub Capitolio extruebat, congereret, aucto etiam ex sancta Agnete beatae Constantiae sepulchro, frustra reclamantibus monachis loci, qui postea mortuo Paulo, sepulchrum illud porphyreticum a Sixto pontifice reperiere."

- (11) Undated letter from Cardinal Ammannati Piccolomini, in Ammannati Piccolomini 1997, 2: 1124-6, "Intelligo ex litteris tuis quae cupiat beatissimus pater de numismatibus inventis. Curabo rem quanta diligentia potero et fidum mittam, qui illa conquirat et ferat. Puto tamen distracta in varios esse. Apud me, teste Deo, nulla omnino sunt; neque enim iis sum delectatus. Tantum, cum essem Pientiae, de inventis audivi, et unum solum inspexi, oblatum mihi a quodam canonico, qui ab inventore acceperat. Referebat ad trecenta esse numero. Quantum ex superscriptione perspexi, ex novissimis sunt: nomen enim erat novi ac paene ignoti imperatoris. Similia esse puto quae reliqua sunt. Sed ad praeceptum pontificis me accingo. Vale."

Later history: Lorenzo de' Medici acquired many of Barbo's gems, which later entered the Farnese collection.

- 1 For poems about the garden, which describe its porticoes as gleaming with gold, see Weiss 1958, 40.
- 2 "Item puer tenens in manibus canem quem ponit ad faciem, et ridet, et sedet, trajectans ab illo qui fuit d. Stephani de Porcariis, valoris 12 ducati," Müntz 1878-82, 2: 200.
- 3 Bober and Rubinstein 1986, 104-5, no. 68; Gasparri 1994b. Using the inventories of Lorenzo de' Medici's collection, Fusco and Corti (2006, 29-107) have identified many of Barbo's antique gems and hardstone vessels.
- 4 Bober and Rubinstein 1986, 155-7, no. 123; Fusco and Corti 2006, 2. Barbo was the executor of Trevisan's estate. For Trevisan's collection see Paschini 1939; Bagemihl 1993.
- 5 Weiss 1969, 187; Salomon 2003, 8. For payments made by Barbo for antique gems and cameos, see Zippel 1904, 188-92.
- 6 Müntz 1878-82, 2: 131-2 n. 4; Weiss 1958, 168; Salomon 2003, 14; Fusco and Corti 2006, 2.

- 7 Müntz 1878-82, 2: 133-4 n. 5; Bober and Rubinstein 1986, 200, no. 168; Fusco and Corti 2006, 2.
- 8 Müntz 1892; Bianchi 2004, 13-18, 158-59.
- 9 The poem was first published in Bianchi 2004, 153-5, who, however, mistakes the subject of this epigram for the porphyry sarcophagus of Sta. Costanza. Another large ancient basin now beneath the high altar of S. Marco may once perhaps have been part of Barbo's outdoor collection: the vessel appears next to a representation of the door and window of Palazzo San Marco in a fifteenth-century drawing (Giuliano and Fusconi 1984, 183).
- 10 Chambers 1989, 271 n. 45; Modigliani 2003, 127-8.

4 BELVEDERE (MAP 3)

After his election to the papacy in November 1503, Giuliano della Rovere initiated a series of extraordinary artistic commissions: the rebuilding of St. Peter's, the decoration of the Stanze and the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and the construction of Bramante's Belvedere gardens and statue gallery. He had already rehearsed the idea of a statue court with the one he had created as cardinal at SS. Apostoli (*della Rovere, Cardinal Giuliano) but after his election he conceived of a much more elaborate *cortile* and garden for the display of masterpiece sculptures.

The long, porticoed gardens of Bramante's Belvedere recalled both literary descriptions of ancient settings and real archeological landscapes: the hippodrome of Pliny's Tuscan villa, the Temple of Fortuna Preneste, antique circuses and stadia, or Nero's Domus Transitoria.¹ Albertini, in his guidebook of 1510, describes its lush gardens and "towers, baths, and aqueducts." Bramante created space for della Rovere's statue court between his new gardens and the older villa of Innocent VII, built in the 1480s at a high vantage point to the north of the papal palace (see Figs. 114 and 115). Some have speculated that Julius II planned the statue collection only after the discovery of the *Laocoön* in 1506.² Yet, given his weakness for antique sculpture (documented in the battles for figural marbles waged with Lorenzo de' Medici as early as 1489), it is unlikely that he would have started planning the Belvedere without a space for his collection in mind.

The first documented antique object in the Belvedere was a large colored-marble basin brought in 1504 from the Baths of Titus and installed at

the bottom of the gardens.¹ On the plan in the *Codex Coner* it appears as a shaded circle in the middle of the lower terrace (see Fig. 115). Here della Rovere repeated one of the design features of his *cortile* and collection at SS. Apostoli, where a massive porphyry basin had stood at the center of the garden (see Figs. 112 and 158). The second antique work to reach the Belvedere was the *Laocoön* (see Fig. 116), which had emerged from the ground on January 14, 1506 in the vineyard of Felice de' Fredis (no. 1 and 2).² After its discovery so many large crowds assembled day and night at Felice de' Fredis's house to see the work that, according to Isabella d'Este's agents in Rome, "it seemed a Jubilee." De' Fredis even had to sleep next to the statue to protect it from thieves (no. 2). Given the excitement it generated, it is not surprising that many collectors in Rome desperately wanted the work. An immediate offer came from Julius II's nephew Cardinal Galeotto Franciotti della Rovere, who was then redecorating the Cancelleria Vecchia, while "the Romans," presumably the Conservators, also wanted it for the Capitoline hill (no. 1 and 4). In the end de' Fredis could not resist the will of the pope or the highly generous fee that Julius II paid for the statue, consisting of the annual tax receipts from two city gates.³ Soon after closing the deal, before June 1506, della Rovere installed the *Laocoön* at the Belvedere in a place of honor at the south wall (see Fig. 114; no. 4).

About sixty years after the fact, Francesco da Sangallo wrote an extraordinary account of the statue's excavation, which was witnessed by his father Giuliano da Sangallo and Michelangelo (no. 23). Even before the sculpture emerged from the ground, he claims, his father recognized it as the "Laocoön, which Pliny mentions."⁴ The statue had indeed been so famous in antiquity that Pliny referred to it by name in his *Natural History* (34-37). According to Pliny, the Emperor Titus had displayed the work in his palace and prized it as a masterpiece carved by Hegesandros, Athenodoros, and Polydoros of Rhodes *ex uno lapide* (out of a single block). In fact, the work is made in several different pieces, as Michelangelo and Gian Cristoforo Romano were quick to point out (no. 4).

By Renaissance standards, the *Laocoön* was the most exceptional antique statue ever discovered in

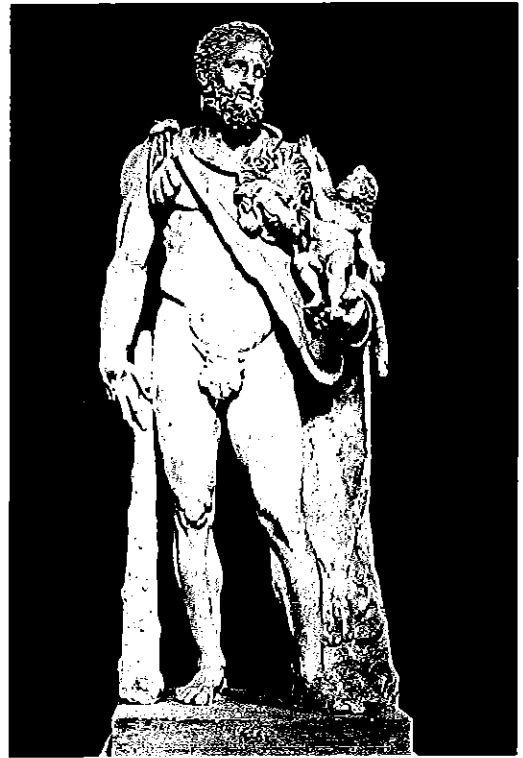
Rome: the names of its sculptors were known, it had been owned by an emperor, and it emerged from the ground almost fully intact, missing only the right arm of Laocoön and that of his younger son. Immediately after its discovery, it became the first Renaissance antiquity to achieve truly international fame, to such an extent that it made the Belvedere an imperative stopover for diplomats, artists, and pilgrims. A widespread demand for copies ensued and in 1510 Bramante held a competition (judged by Raphael) to see who could make the best wax replica of the statue. The winning model by Jacopo Sansovino was cast in bronze and sold to the Venetian antiquities collector, Domenico Grimani ("Grimani").⁵ Unsurprisingly, the statue also inspired a large number of poems; five months after its excavation Cesare Trivulzio sent off a package of Laocoön-related poems to his brother in Milan (no. 4). The surviving verses treat a wide range of themes, including Laocoön's love for his sons, the kindness of Julius for exhibiting the statue to the *popolo Romano*, or the statue's pain and piety. One composed by Evangelista Maddaleni de' Capodiferro, written in the voice of the Laocoön himself ("Laocoön ego sum") portrays him as a patriot who died for the sake of his country. His unjust fate was to be frozen in marble and suffer in silence, "without voice or soul" for eternity.⁶

Fierce competition for the *Laocoön* helped to usher in a new era of antiquities collecting in Rome, raising prices for the best sculptures so high that only a few could afford them. In May 1507, when a Roman pulled an impressive *Hercules and Telephos* out of his garden near the Campo de' Fiori (Fig. 167), Julius II jumped at the chance to buy it and rewarded the owner with a life-long benefice (nos. 5 and 6).⁷ Albertini's guidebook tells us that Julius II placed the statue near an inscription reading *Procul este profani* ("You who are not holy stay far away"), the words spoken by the Cumaean Sibyl to Aeneas as he entered the underworld in Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.258).⁸ Soon after the arrival of the *Hercules and Telephos*, the *Apollo Belvedere* (see Fig. 111) came to the Vatican from della Rovere's collection at SS. Apostoli. The figure, acquired by della Rovere in 1489, was probably destined for the Belvedere statue court from the moment the pope began work on the *cortile*. Yet a letter recently discovered by

Christoph Frommel reveals that della Rovere transferred it from SS. Apostoli only in October 1508 (no. 7). The statue had remained in place until just after the death (in September 1508) of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, who had been renting Giuliano della Rovere's ex-palace and seemingly had reserved the right to keep the famous *Apollo*. Payments were made only in August 1511 for its installation in a niche at the Belvedere (see Figs. 114 and 117).¹¹

Re-examining these payments, Frommel asked why the *Apollo*'s installation took place nearly three years after its transfer from SS. Apostoli. Perhaps, he suggested, the pope first displayed it and other works seen by Albertini in the papal palace, only later moving them to the Belvedere. Since Albertini located the *Hercules and Telephos* in the "palatine palace," not in the Belvedere, Frommel proposed that this figure, the *Apollo Belvedere*, and the statue of *Venus Felix* (see Fig. 118), which Albertini saw "next to" the *Apollo*, initially stood in the *Logge* or another area of the papal palazzo. Frommel pointed out that the *Laocoön* is the only statue which Albertini specifically located "in the Belvedere," while the others he merely described as having been "transferred to the Vatican" (nos. 9-10).¹² The precise location of these sculptures in the early stages of the Belvedere's history remains unclear and Albertini's limited description of the papal collection can be interpreted in many different ways. Yet the entrance to the Belvedere statue court seems a closer match to Albertini's description of the *Hercules and Telephos*, which he locates "in the palatine palace near the door of the portico, above the garden" (no. 10), than to the *Logge* or the more secluded areas of the papal palace.

Albertini's guidebook also mentions another statue in the papal collections (no. 9). This was a statue of Hercules and Antaeus, which he attributed to the ancient sculptor Polykleitos.¹³ It is likely that this statue and the *Venus Felix* came directly out of della Rovere's older collection at SS. Apostoli (*della Rovere, Cardinal Giuliano). At some point before February 1512, Julius II further expanded the Belvedere collection by purchasing a sleeping female figure from the Maffei (see Fig. 96; *Maffei).¹⁴ The statue actually depicts the Cretan princess Ariadne, about to be woken by Bacchus. For most Renaissance viewers,

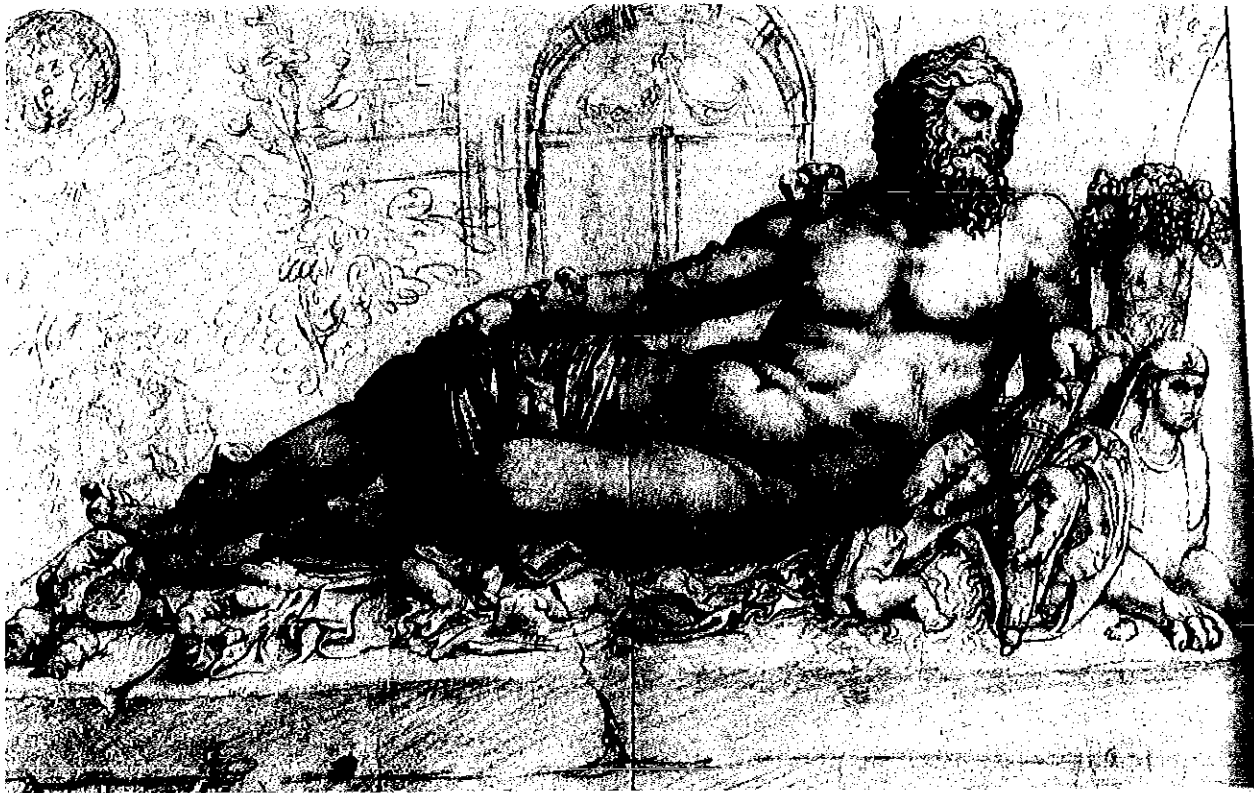


167 *Hercules and Telephos*, Vatican Museums

however, the figure's serpentine arm-bracelet made her Cleopatra, shown committing suicide by snakebite. Before 1536, a rocky backdrop was created for the niche of the "Cleopatra," transforming her setting into a grotto of a sleeping nymph reclining at the source of a spring.¹⁵

Julius II also added to the Belvedere a pair of river gods discovered in the Isaeum in the Campus Martius. In February 1512 a personification of the *Tiber* was excavated, while its twin the *Nile* came to light in the following months (Figs. 168 and 169; no. 13 and 14). The *Tiber* had actually seen the light of day many decades earlier. Poggio Bracciolini wrote about its discovery in his *De varietate fortunae* but reported that the owner had covered it up to avoid the excessive attention of curious spectators.¹⁶

Della Rovere's successor Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) was primarily interested in acquiring sculptures for his own family's palace at Piazza Navona and villa on Monte Mario (*Palazzo Medici, *Villa Medici). The pope had the Belvedere river gods

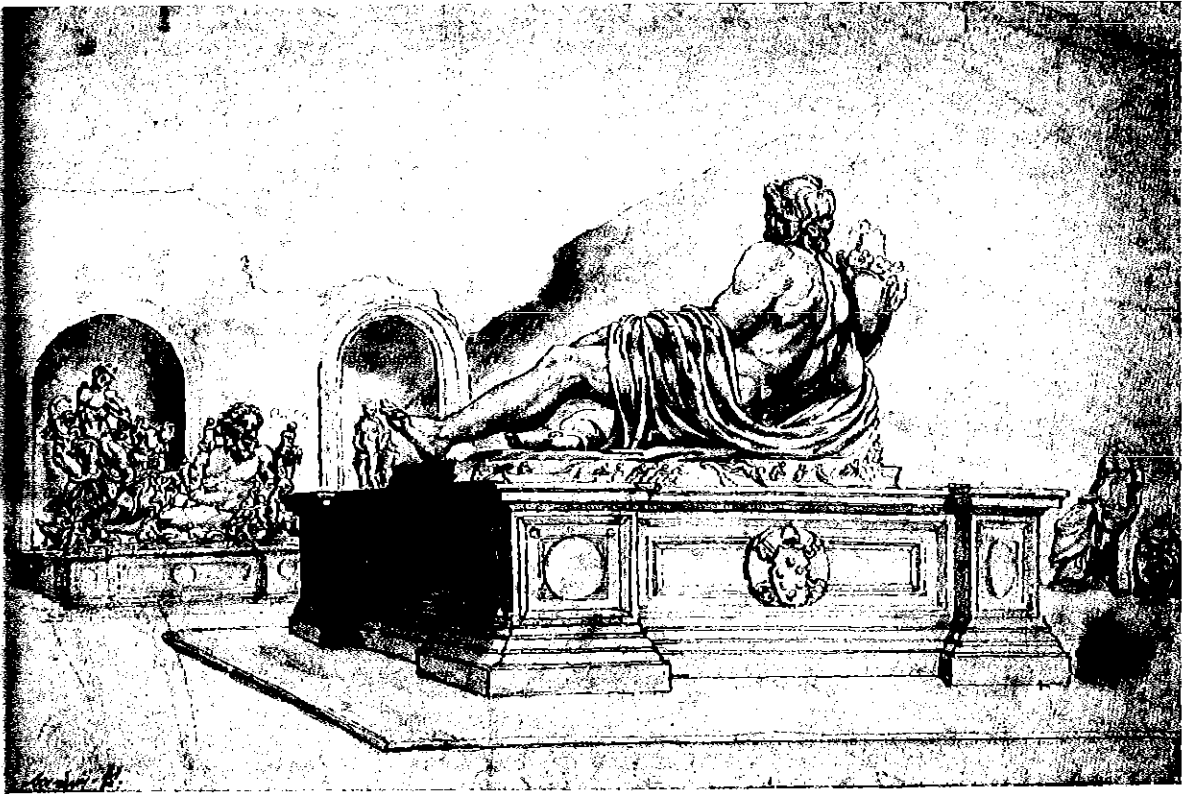


168 Hendrick Goltzius, *Nile*, Haarlem, Teylers Museum, inv. K III 021, 1591

made into fountains (no. 17); a drawing attributed to Van Heemskerck shows them lying on tall plinths decorated with Medici coats of arms, facing each other across the *cortile* (Fig. 169).¹⁷ Another antique statue which has been associated with Leo X's patronage is the river god *Tigris*, although its arrival at the Belvedere statue court is undocumented.¹⁸ A restorer sculpted a lion on the lip of the urn held by this river god, suggesting that the statue may have been acquired and partially re-carved under Leo X. Yet Rubinstein has argued that it was Clement VII who brought the figure to the Belvedere. She identified the *Tigris* with a statue seen in 1527 lying "in front of the houses of the Santacroce," and suggested that Clement brought the work to the Vatican only after that date.¹⁹

According to Vasari and other contemporary observers, after Pope Leo X's death in 1522, the newly elected Hadrian VI turned a cold shoulder to the Belvedere. During his short papacy, he was

said to have restricted visits to these "idols of the ancients." A group of Venetian ambassadors reported that the pontiff closed off all but one of the twelve entrances to the collection, the one joined to his own chambers (no. 17). Some scholars have taken this statement at face value, arguing that the pope wished to barricade the collection entirely, while others have presented the opposite view that Hadrian wished to keep the statues all to himself. Both of these positions are probably exaggerated.²⁰ In any case, the often-repeated, yet anachronistic notion that the Dutch artist Jan van Scorel served as Pope Hadrian's "curator of antiquities" at the Belvedere should be put to rest. It has arisen from Karel Van Mander's statement, in his *Life of Van Scorel*, that the pope put him "in charge of the Belvedere." Van Mander's words, however, most likely allude to Van Scorel's position as a court artist at the Vatican, in which capacity he seems to have lived at the Belvedere.²¹



169 The Belvedere *Tiber and Nile*, attributed to Maarten van Heemskerck, London, British Museum, Prints & Drawings, inv. 1946-7-13-639, c. 1532-7

There would have been no precedent at the time for an antiquities "curator" at the Vatican or elsewhere.

When Pope Clement VII came to the throne in 1523, whatever barriers Hadrian might have placed on the *cortile* were lifted, and at least a few more sculptures added. It was probably during his papacy that the *Torso Belvedere* (see Fig. 25) came to the Vatican collection, though it is not certain how and when the pope managed to acquire it. The figure is probably one of the works described in 1537 by Johann Fichard, who saw lying in the vicinity of the Tiber and Nile "some torsos of statues of which one is especially commended by artists" (no. 20).²² Account records from the years of Clement's papacy document the purchase of *certe maschere antiche*, large antique masks that were eventually hung round the *cortile* (see Fig. 168).²³

With its elevated position and ordered plantings, the Belvedere as a whole could be described

equally as a "hanging garden" and statue court. In contrast to the more informal garden planted with laurel bushes, mulberries, and tall cypresses just to its west, the *cortile delle statue* was paved with terracotta tiles and neatly planted with rows of orange trees (no. 17). Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola described the setting as a "perfumed wood of citrus trees in a stone pavement" (no. 16). From a loggia and fountain-house to the west of the courtyard, a large fountain fed the irrigation channels that watered the orange grove. Within the *cortile* proper, more cooling fountains surrounded visitors from all sides, at the *Tigris* and *Ariadne* on the north corners, the *Tiber* and *Nile* in the center, and the south side of the courtyard. The large fountain to the south, situated between the *Laocoön* and the *Apollo Belvedere*, paired a grotesque mask with an antique sarcophagus supported by sphinxes, as is shown in a drawing by Heemskerck (see Fig. 117).²⁴ Lastly,

the fountain made up of an altar and a sculpture of a rodent or bear seen in this drawing has not been identified nor is it ever mentioned in any known description of the Belvedere. Indeed, this curious fountain was probably never in the formal Belvedere *cortile* and Van Heemskerck, as in other instances (e.g. Fig. 66), combined two sketches made in two parts of Rome on a single page, positioning them against a single horizon line.²⁵

The statues were posed on marching bases, all of a similar format to the original one that still supports the *Laocoön* (see Figs. 116 and 117); these were the bases that scandalized Pico della Mirandola because of their resemblance to "little altars" (no. 16).²⁶ Giuliano della Rovere had used this model of base already in his cardinal's collection (see Fig. 113). Eventually, the niches were painted. Francisco de Holanda's sketchbook, for example, illustrates a green arbor and flying birds frescoed in the niche of the *Apollo Belvedere*.²⁷

The villa became a residence for visiting artists: Bramante himself, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo all lived there for a time. Yet for any artist who wished to visit it, the Belvedere collection was

probably one of the most easily accessible in Rome. Visitors did not need to pass through the papal palace to reach the statue court but, as Fichard describes (no. 20), could have entered by Bramante's dramatic spiral staircase at the northeast corner. A view in the Berlin albums shows the path leading to the spiral stairway and what seems to have been the "public" entrance to the statue *cortile* at the bottom of the hill (Fig. 170).²⁸ Its prestige and accessibility made the Belvedere the most frequently sketched, the most imitated, and the most highly praised antiquities collection in all of Rome. Vasari effectively canonized it in his preface to the third part of his *Lives* (first published in 1550), where he emphasized the role of the Belvedere sculptures in the shift to the "Third Era" of the arts.²⁹ The reception of the Belvedere sculptures by major European artists such as Titian, Bernini, and Canova can only be mentioned in passing here. Its impact on the visual arts was so profound and long-lasting that, as Haskell and Penny wrote, it "set the standards by which art of all kinds was to be evaluated for more than three hundred years."³⁰

170 The Belvedere, anonymous, Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. 79.D.2a, vol. 2, fol. 36, 1530s?

