Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, called Benedetto da Rovezzano
(Canapale, near Pistoia, *c.*1474–1552 or shortly after, Vallombrosa)

Saint John the Baptist in the Desert
*c.*1510
terracotta (formerly painted in imitation bronze)
74 x 44 x 29 cm;
29 1/8 x 17 3/8 x 11 3/8 in

Provenance

With Stefano Bardini (1836–1922), Florence, by 1902;
His sale, London, Christie's, 26–30 May 1902, lot 559 (French catalogue) or 554 (English catalogue), reproduced pl. 43, and sold on the 27th for 400 Guineas to a Mr Burns (probably Walter Spencer Morgan Burns, 1872–1929);
Private collection, London, by 2006;
Private collection, New York, 2007–19, from whom acquired by the present owner.

Literature

W. Bode, 'Ein Florentiner Thonbildner vom Anfang der Hochrenaissance', *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, n.s., 13, 1901–2, pp. 1–4, reproduced p. 3 (as Florentine master from the beginning of the High Renaissance);

Catalogue des objets d'art, antiques du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance provenant de la collection Bardini de Florence dont la vente aura lieu chez Mr. Christie . . . le 27 Mai 1902, 2 vols, Paris, 1902, vol. [1], p. 91, no. 559, and vol. [2], pl. 43 (as 'Florence, XVe siècle');
Catalogue of a Choice Collection of Pictures and Other Works of Art, Chiefly Italian, of Mediaeval and Renaissance Time, the Property of Signor Stephano Bardini of Florence, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 1902, p. 88, no. 554 (as School of Donatello);
W. Bode, *Florentiner Bildhauer der Renaissance*, Berlin, 1902, pp. 314–15, and 316, fig. 139 (as Florentine master around 1500);
C. von Fabriczy, 'Kritisches Verzeichnis toskanischer Holz- und Tonstatuen bis zum Beginn des Cinquecento', *Jahrbuch der königlich preuszischen Kunstsammlungen*, 30, 1909, *Beiheft*, pp. 1–88 (p. 40, no. 141, as 'Meister der Johannesstatuetten');
W. Bode, *Florentiner Bildhauer der Renaissance*, 2nd edn, Berlin, 1910, pp. 310–11 and fig. 166 (as Florentine master around 1500);
W. Bode, *Florentiner Bildhauer der Renaissance*, 3rd edn, Berlin, 1911, pp. 310–11 and fig. 166 (as Florentine master around 1500);
W. Bode, *Florentiner Bildhauer der Renaissance*, 4th edn, Berlin, 1921, pp. 303–4 and fig. 187 (as Florentine master around 1500);
F. Schottmüller, *Königliche Museen zu Berlin: Beschreibung der Bildwerke der christlichen Epochen. Zweite Auflage*, vol. 5: *Die italienischen und spanischen Bildwerke der Renaissance und des Barocks in Marmor, Ton, Holz und Stuck*, Berlin, 1913, p. 93 (as 'Meister der Johannesstatuetten');
L. Planiscig, 'Toscanische Plastiken des Quattrocento (unbekannte Werke Francesco di Giorgios und Andrea del Verrocchios)', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 39 (= n.s. 3), 1929, pp. 73–90 (pp. 83–4 and notes 26–7, and fig. 85, as Francesco di Giorgio);
F. Schottmüller, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Bildwerke des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums. Die italienischen und spanischen Bildwerke der Renaissance und des Barocks,* vol. 1: *Die Bildwerke in Stein, Holz, Ton und Wachs. Zweite Auflage*, Berlin, 1933, p. 146 (as Baccio da Montelupo);
J. Pope-Hennessy and R. Lightbown, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 3 vols, London, 1964, vol. 1, p. 193 (as Master of the David and Saint John Statuettes, and in the Museum Bardini, Florence);
G. Gentilini, 'Ignoto maestro fiorentino fra il 1505 e il 1510 (Maestro del San Giovannino), *San Giovannino adolescente, seduto* . . . ', in *La civiltà del cotto: arte della terracotta nell'area fiorentina dal XV al XX secolo*, exh. cat., Florence, 1980, pp. 97–8, no. 2.8 (p. 98, as 'Maestro del San Giovannino': Jacopo Sansovino?);
F. Caglioti, 'Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, dit Benedetto da Rovezzano . . ., *Saint Jean-Baptiste* . . ., vers 1500–1510', in *D'Agostino di Duccio à Caffieri*, exh. cat., Paris, 2012, pp. 22–7 (p. 25, as Benedetto da Rovezzano);

J. Warren, *The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Italian Sculpture*, 2 vols, London 2016, vol. 1, p. 62 and notes 9, 10 and 20 (p. 66; as Florence, early XVIth century);
J. W. Mann, 'Italian, 16th century, Florence, *Seated Saint John the Baptist*', in J. W. Mann and E. Wyckoff (eds), *Learning to See: Renaissance and Baroque Masterworks from the Phoebe Dent Weil and Mark S. Weil Collection*, exh. cat., St. Louis, Mo. 2017, pp. 230–33, no. 73 (pp. 232, fig. 54, and 233, as attributed to Benedetto da Rovezzano);
L. Principi, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano . . ., attributed to, *John the Baptist* . . .', in A. Chong and L. Principi (eds), *The Sculpture of Giovan Angelo Montorsoli and His Circle: Myth and Faith in Renaissance Florence*, exh. cat., Manchester, N.H. 2018, pp. 96–9, no. 2 (pp. 98, and 99, fig. 5, as 'Benedetto da Rovezzano?').

In the first decades of the sixteenth century, Florence, coming to the end of its long republican history, became a lively centre for the production, on an unprecedented scale, of terracotta sculptures whose format was adapted for display in private homes. There were very few wealthy residences that did not house at least one terracotta, in high-relief or in the round, dedicated to themes of Christian devotion or civic pride or celebrating the passion for the ancient world which was then at the peak of its popularity. Certain subjects, such as Saint John the Baptist, or the victorious David or Judith, were able to appeal simultaneously to religious piety and patriotism. Others, such as Abundance, satisfied both lovers of the classical world and those with a strong sense of 'national' belonging. The terracotta pieces could be coated with several colours, or even glazed (in these cases, famous workshops specialising in this, such as those of the Della Robbia and Buglioni families, were generally brought in); alternatively, they could be painted with a single colour, primarily to simulate the more 'noble' and durable medium of bronze, and were sometimes gilded. The great variety and extent of the demand for these modelled figures explains why it involved both important and innovatory personalities, whose work was at the cutting edge of the development of sculpture – artists such as Giovanfrancesco Rustici (1475–1554) and Benedetto da Rovezzano and the Della Robbia and Buglioni families – and a large number of minor masters. The latter focused almost exclusively on this domestic practice or devoted themselves to a mix of artisanal and mercantile activities, including non-figurative items, such as the so-called 'Master of the Unruly Children', who has now been plausibly identified as Sandro di Lorenzo di Smeraldo (1483–1554).[1]

Inevitably many of these works were lost between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries or were dispersed throughout the world through the activities of dealers and collectors from the *Ottocento* onwards. This means that studies and rediscoveries are still advancing, and there are still missing many firm reference points that would enable an overall reconstruction of this historical chapter. The specific critical vicissitudes of the *Saint John the Baptist* listed here are an eloquent reflection of the difficulties in making progress that have occurred up to now, for at least two reasons: because the statue was among the first works of the genre to re-emerge and has attracted the attention of specialists since the

beginning of the twentieth century, and second, because even now, more than a century later, it must be placed among the indisputable highlights of the genre itself.

In 1900, this *Saint John the Baptist* was sent to the *Universal Exhibition* in Paris by the famous dealer Stefano Bardini of Florence, who, according to the documentation preserved in his archives (now owned by the Italian State in Florence), had purchased it only recently.[2] As can be seen in the two catalogues (in French and English) of the Bardini auction, held in London in 1902, the antiquarian assigned the terracotta piece to the fifteenth century and to the 'Donatello school'. This attribution was soon overruled by subsequent research, but it reflects the artist's origins in the culture of the early Renaissance.[3] Bardini, however, correctly associated the figure with a second *Saint John the Baptist* in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence (inv. S538 = M186; fig. 1). The present figure is not identical but is very close in concept and format to the Bargello statue, which had been dated to the sixteenth century in the museum's most recent guide of 1898.[4] In the meantime, the Bardini piece had engaged the attention of the greatest connoisseur of the period (and not only of Renaissance sculpture), Wilhelm Bode, in successive publications between 1901 and 1921. He employed it, on the one hand, in contrast with the marble *Saint John the Baptist* allegedly by the young Michelangelo which was, at that time, in the Berlin Museums (in reality the sculpture, which was to be lost in 1945, was a depiction of the mythical shepherd Aristaeus and a seventeenth-century work by Domenico Pieratti). On the other hand, Bode utilised the Bardini terracotta to begin to focus on the personality of an early sixteenth-century Florentine sculptor who was particularly skilled at inventing and modelling in clay the figure of John the Baptist at a young age.[5]

As is common in the pioneering publications of connoisseurs, Bode's catalogue was too inclusive, gathering together not only pieces by the same hand as the Bardini *Baptist* (in particular, the *Baptist* half-bust, which is now in the Minneapolis Institute of Art; fig. 2),[6] but also pieces by other anonymous sculptors – in some cases from the same workshop; others similar only in general type – under a single stylistic banner, which later (with Cornelius von Fabriczy in 1909) became that of the 'Meister der Johannesstatuetten' or 'Johannesfiguren'.[7] The subsequent development of studies and the emergence of new terracotta pieces in this

field should have led experts to attempt precise distinctions sooner or later. Instead, the attributional short cuts taken by antiquarians expanded the activity of the 'Meister' to the point that it covered too wide and varied an area of Florentine clay modelling from half a millennium ago. In 1964, in particular, the *oeuvre* of the so-called 'Master of the Saint John Statuettes' was expanded by John Pope-Hennessy and Ronald Lightbown into that of 'Master of the David and Saint John Statuettes', to include a series of triumphant David figures that indeed show certain affinities with the style of the principal artist but have nothing to do with his best output. They rather represent the contributions of collaborators, followers and mere trade rivals, committed to what was currently fashionable and commercial.[8] While the *corpus* of the 'Meister' grew under the impulse of iconographic and typological affinities, continuing to host mainly images of Saint John the Baptist, David and Saint Jerome, other pieces more characteristic of his manner were omitted, as was the case with the *Knight Trampling a Conquered Foe* in the Museo Horne in Florence (fig. 3), which, because of its subject matter, was often associated with the groups of *Battles* by Giovanfrancesco Rustici. However, some rare, more attentive observers, such as Carlo Gamba in 1920 and 1961, associated it with Andrea Sansovino (*c.*1467–1529) or Benedetto da Rovezzano,[9] or attributed it, as Ulrich Middeldorf did in 1935, to Bode's 'Meister', identifying him as Baccio da Montelupo (1469–*c.*1535).[10]

In fact, a long and evidently premature debate about the artist's identity was taking place. Since the relationship between the 'Meister' and the young Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570) has been repeatedly traced back to Bode in recent publications, it is worth noting that the great German scholar named Sansovino, among other contemporaries, with the express intention of discounting him. The proposal for the identification of the artist as Sansovino emerged, cautiously, only with Giancarlo Gentilini in 1980 and 1992,[11] and was then quickly disseminated by Bruce Boucher in 1991 and again in 2001.[12] Similarly, it has been suggested that the recognition of the master as Benedetto da Rovezzano was already found in the literature of the early twentieth century: this is not true – it appeared for the first time in 1996 and then in 2012 in texts by the present writer.[13] A century ago, that sculptor had simply been recalled a couple of times in connection with works that were not yet traced back to the 'Meister der Johannesstatuetten', the first time by Gamba, as previously cited,

and the second time in a 1933 entry by Frida Schottmüller on a *David* in the Berlin Museums (which is, in fact, a terracotta from the circle of the 'Meister' but not by his hand).[14] The fortunes of Rustici in relation to the 'Meister' followed a different path, but he also was never identified as the anonymous artist, because in 1935 Adolfo Venturi attributed only the *Saint John the Baptist* from the Bargello to Rustici without any reference to other similar pieces;[15] meanwhile, that artist's name was forcibly invoked by many – as has been mentioned already – for the Horne *Knight*, without a grasp of the connections of the latter with the truly authentic works by the 'Meister'. The only candidacy for the mysterious 'Meister' that boasted a semblance of credibility was that of Baccio da Montelupo, made by Schottmüller in 1933, on the informal advice of Middeldorf and Werner Gramberg, and then repeated by Middeldorf himself in 1935,[16] while the proposal to consider Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439–1501), which had been put forward by Leo Planiscig in 1929, specifically on the basis of the former Bardini *Baptist*, fell immediately and justifiably on deaf ears.[17] In 1952, Martin Weinberger spoke out with special conviction in favour of Montelupo, in an article that curiously took its cue from an anonymous bronze *Hercules* in the Frick Collection in New York, a work that has now been definitively reassigned to Francesco di Giorgio.[18]

The suggestion of recognizing the 'Meister' in the young Jacopo Sansovino, which was promoted by Gentilini by wisely adding, for the first time, the Horne *Knight* to the 'Meister's *oeuvre*, gained traction in the scholarly literature for about thirty years (even among those who, like Boucher, reverted back to Rustici for the Horne group). However, in 2014, in the face of my arguments, Gentilini himself finally set aside the Sansovino solution in favour of the young Benedetto da Rovezzano (albeit by publishing two new pieces – *A Pair of Kneeling Angels Holding Candelabra*, glazed by Benedetto Buglioni (1459/60–1521) – which should not join the *corpus* to which our *Baptist* belongs).[19] Jeremy Warren, on the other hand, maintained the Sansovino attribution in 2016, in his catalogue entry on the *Saint John the Baptist in the Desert* in the Wallace Collection in London (fig. 4), which had long been justifiably included in the literature among the best examples by the 'Meister'.[20] Warren also alluded to the ascription of the former Bardini *Baptist* to Rovezzano, which was then

circulating (my having made it known in 2012),[21] without commenting on it and without considering my proposal to reassign the core works by the 'Meister' to Rovezzano.

In the selection Warren made of about twenty terracotta objects representing Saint John the Baptist which are relevant to the issue in various ways, the ex-Bardini figure is mentioned three times, as being separate items from a Christie's auction of 6 July 2006 (the second item on Warren's list), then from the Bardini auction in London in 1902 (the third item), and also from the Galleria Altomani in Pesaro in 2015 (the fourth from last item).[22] At the top of the group of associated works is a piece that has appeared several times during the past century in the bibliography of private collections and auctions (the Emil W. Weinberger collection, sold in Vienna in 1929, and the Ruth Blumka collection, sold in New York in 1996) and finally ended up in St. Louis, Missouri, in the Phoebe Dent Weil and Mark S. Weil Collection, pledged as an irrevocable gift to the St. Louis Art Museum (2017).[23] This *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 5), which was labelled in 2001 by Boucher as being by Jacopo Sansovino,[24] is certainly a replica of the former Bardini terracotta piece, of the same size but with a few variations, and it reinforces the status of the latter as the autograph prototype. Though its execution is decidedly different and less accomplished, the Weil *Baptist* may nevertheless have been produced by an independent artist from the same workshop.

On grounds of quality and style, which are always inescapable, the most successful group of 'Meister' terracotta pieces must be limited to three whole figures of Saint John the Baptist in the desert (the ex-Bardini version in the current exhibition, and the examples in the Bargello and the Wallace Collection), to the bust of *Saint John the Baptist* in Minneapolis (although its state of conservation is compromised), and to the Horne *Knight*. To them can be added two other pieces: the head of the Baptist at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (inv. 6819–1859) which, in recent centuries, has lost the rest of its body and has been reassembled on a half-bust in stucco, shaped and draped in the antique style (as if it were the portrait of a young man; fig. 6);[25] and the half-bust of a young man at the Bargello (inv. S537 = M158), cleanly cut below the diaphragm, and less fascinating because the beautiful head is at odds with the banal rendering of the torso, which was evidently delegated to an accomplice (fig. 7). The *Boy with Thorn* (*Spinario*) at the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris,

which has already been attributed to the 'Meister' (and later to Jacopo Sansovino) several times, should be included in this group thanks to the full adherence of the style – but it is of lesser quality (fig. 8).[26] There are also at least two examples of *Saint Jerome in the Desert*, one in the Bode-Museum in Berlin (inv. 171) and the other in the Seattle Art Museum (inv. 57.90, as a Spanish artefact), but, for reasons of space, it is better to limit ourselves here to the images of Saint John the Baptist and the other youthful subjects that are listed above.[27]

The great fortune reaped by the Bardini, Bargello and Wallace terracotta works, whose replicas were mostly smaller and subject to slight but continuous variations in the pose of the protagonist and in the details of the glimpse of desert that welcomes him, is important proof of the intelligence and originality of the formulae of the *primus inventor*. It is also possible that these sculptures had an influence on contemporary painting, as suggested by at least two works by Giuliano Bugiardini (1476–1555) featuring the youthful Saint John the Baptist in the desert (formerly London, Matthiesen Gallery; and Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale), in which he is seated on a rock set against the pastoral background, and is depicted almost the same size as the clay pieces themselves.[28] These findings oblige us to retrace – albeit briefly – the origins and developments of the iconography of Saint John the Baptist in Renaissance sculpture, in order to then contextualise the contribution of our terracotta master in the early sixteenth century.

The intense religious and patriotic affection nurtured by Florentine society towards Saint John the Baptist, its greatest patron saint, had produced, from the late thirteenth century, a boom in new figurative ideas – both iconic and narrative – connected with his legend.[29] This trend experienced a further explosion during the fifteenth century, when even the more challenging art of sculpture was called upon, through the work of Donatello, to contribute powerfully to the imagery of the 'Forerunner'. After producing two masterpieces in the form of statues in bronze and wood in 1423 and 1438, both with strong personality but in which the Baptist is depicted wearing the traditional clothes of an adult prophet (the first one formerly in Berlin, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, and today in Moscow, Pushkin Museum; the second in Venice, at the Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari), Donatello explored, between approximately 1440 and 1442, the possibility of transferring the expression of asceticism and

prophecy into the features of an admirable and elegant young man – one who has already been heavily tested by hardship, but retains poise and a resolute attitude – in the large Martelli marble of *Saint John the Baptist* (Bargello). The result was unparalleled, and yet it was a source of inspiration (almost always graceful) for much of the output of Desiderio da Settignano (*c.*1430–1464), and for a remarkable series of statues of the adolescent Baptist carved in marble by Benedetto da Maiano (1441–1497), Benedetto da Rovezzano, Giovanfrancesco Rustici, and various other Florentine sculptors throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[30] In the meantime, Desiderio had also experimented with the same iconography in more economic productions for domestic furnishings, as attested by a half-bust in painted stucco from the Berlin Museums which went missing in 1945 and which had less successful replicas made after it, by anonymous artists, in painted terracotta, examples of which are now in museums in Washington and Boston.[31] Here, the handsome, still pre-pubescent prophet, depicted with open lips as in the Donatello marble, no longer wears his hair short and close-cropped, but is instead depicted with a thick mop that has been dishevelled by the wind, giving the subject an increased sense of his life in the wild, and of his spiritual turmoil. The art-historical bibliography in the Italian language today tends to use the diminutive *Little Saint John* (*San Giovannino*) for all these figures; in fact, during the Renaissance in Tuscany this name was suited exclusively to Saint John the Baptist as an infant and child. In the first phase of his career, Michelangelo was the creator of a true *Little Saint John*, aged seven or eight years old (1495–6): however, his stupendous marble statue remained hidden for four decades in the houses of the secondary – then princely – branch of the Medici family and was sent secretly in 1537 to Úbeda in Andalusia as a gift from the young Duke Cosimo I to Francisco de los Cobos, secretary to Emperor Charles V. This *Little Saint John* was therefore unable to exert the same pressure on Florentine art as Michelangelo's other masterpieces.[32]

The former Bardini *Saint John the Baptist* and its teenage brethren from the Bargello and the Wallace Collection pay tribute to the tradition that passes through Donatello, Desiderio and Benedetto da Maiano, but they update it completely and exquisitely, based on the passion for antiquity that was prevalent in the years around 1500. Knowledge of the recently rediscovered *Laocoön* (in Rome in 1506) has been convincingly identified in the chiastic and

nimble pose of figures, such as that in the former Bardini piece.[33] We may note here also the no less profound and yet discreet influence of the pathos of the so-called *Dying Alexander*, which is visible in the slightly upturned and inclined head of each of these variants; and also of the *Apollo Belvedere*, which inspires the perfect and elastic anatomical canon of each image, the fanatical finish of the flesh and clothing, and the controlled and captivating explosion of ringlets atop the saint's head.

This is undoubtedly the same cultural landscape to which the young Jacopo Sansovino was exposed. This great sculptor, however, drew a heroic impulse from it at a very early age, to the point of being ready to challenge Michelangelo: an instinct that is never found in the 'Meister der Johannesstatuetten'. Moreover, all the modelled works that have come down to us and can be definitively attributed to Sansovino (in wax, clay and metal) reveal an almost innate predisposition towards the *sprezzatura* (the affectation of artlessness), which was now part of the vocabulary of the *Maniera moderna* or modern Italian style. No less gifted from a technical perspective, the 'Meister' was instead accustomed, as a result of his training in fifteenth-century fashion, to make conscientious and pervasive use of the craft, re-cleaning and almost 'licking' his splendid creations until he had concealed and surpassed the freshness of moment of their first invention. These are the characteristics of temperament and conduct that, together with the illuminating recurrence of certain unmistakable types and details between the most refined core of works attributable to Bode's 'Meister' (figs 3 and 4) and the already established output of Benedetto da Rovezzano (figs 9 and 10),[34] point to the clear identification of both artists.

Benedetto, who was twelve years older than Sansovino – just enough of an age gap to mark a clear epochal leap in artistic and cultural education between them at that time – had, compared with his talents, a rather unfortunate career and posthumous fame despite the honour of a personal biography in both editions of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* in 1550 and 1568.[35] When still in Italy, he worked also in the service of foreign clients of royal rank (France), and then emigrated to England (in 1519 or soon afterwards), where he spent nearly his entire adulthood (until around or shortly after 1540). Periods of his life and work which did not fall within their respective boundaries were almost neglected by various

national bibliographies. These omissions were greatly aggravated by the fact that, in the earlier decades in which he was active, Benedetto devoted himself primarily to the highly refined working of Apuan marble (*di quadro*, *di ornato* and *di figura*), while, on the other side of the channel, he much preferred metal casting, urged on by a number of competing factors: the local shortage of stone suitable for his virtuoso talents; the needs and expectations of his great Tudor clientèle; his advancing age, which was unsuited to slaving away at stone. Furthermore, among his indispensable collaborators in England, Benedetto did not find the metallurgical sophistication he had experienced both as an apprentice and master in Tuscany, where the Signoria of the Florentine Republic had turned to him in 1508 to finish the bronze statue of *David* to be sent to France (which Michelangelo had begun six years before but was interrupted by his activity for Pope Julius II).[36] Yet another double blow of bad luck for Benedetto was the fact that his two *opera magna*, namely the marble *Ark of Saint John Gualbert* in Florence (1506–13) and the mostly bronze funerary monument for Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and, later, King Henry VIII in England (*c.*1524–40), remained unfinished, despite his extraordinary efforts, and were then woefully reduced to fragments during the following centuries (fig. 10). Similarly, the statue of the French *David* by Michelangelo and Benedetto (which would have made it possible to verify the quality of the latter's output in metal while he was still in Tuscany) also disappeared.

It therefore took the latest modern studies to reconcile the Italian Benedetto with the English Benedetto; that is, the reconciliation of the stone-carver with the metalworker.[37] As a result of this centuries-long oversight, the Benedetto who modelled wax, clay and other plastic materials had been inexorably obliterated until recent times. Without the understanding of his ability in these mediums, the Benedetto who must have worked with metal well before his contribution to Michelangelo's *David*, and then brilliantly executed his English commissions, would be inconceivable. Furthermore, we have enough terracotta figures that are definitively attributed to the contemporary colleagues of Benedetto whose fortunes intersected in various ways with those of the 'Meister' (Montelupo, Rustici and Sansovino), that one could not help but be surprised that the very strange lack of a single terracotta by Benedetto persisted.

The former Bardini *Baptist* and its sister works declare, in my opinion, not only a talented master in his genre, but also a sculptor accustomed to stone like few others. Even without the fact that they are as well finished as Carrara marbles, these terracotta pieces present all the characteristics, the passages and the quirks of an artist who was consumed by the undercuts and by the *straforare* used in the ornamentation and figures, in order to make them stand out from the background. As is well known, this was one of the principal highlights of the *Ark of Saint John Gualbert*, on which the violence of time and of man was inflicted with particular ease and injury, precisely because of the bold delicacy of those displays of bravura. In our terracotta works, the same sensitivity that Benedetto deployed in his marble pieces is not limited solely to the articulated interplay of the laminated rocks, or to self-satisfaction in the curly masses of hair, but it governs the tactile relationships between the half-naked bodies and hair itself, the fur coats and the rocks. Here, then, are arms and legs completely turned in their various movements; lower layers of a fleece falling here or there with feigned negligence; hems of fleeces coming off chests, shoulders and armpits, indulging themselves by creating cracks, crevices and passages – for example, that at the right breast of the Bargello *Baptist*. And here, again, are the tapering, well-separated fingers and toes; the healthy, sharp clusters of teeth; the turgid knots of animal skins, rendered almost as bows of precious cloth atop the shoulders.

The surface effects achieved by such a 'polishing' of the clay are so convincing that they almost compensate for the partial or integral loss of the ancient pigmentation that all these figures have suffered. In the French catalogue of the Bardini sale in London (1902), the dealer noted of the *Baptist* in his possession (with a sensitivity that we tend to disavow today) that 'this statuette has been coloured and still retains the colour, which aimed to imitate the bronze by mixing gold leaf with paint, creating a magnificent patina effect. In the National Museum of Bargello in Florence, there is a statuette of the same subject, of the same size, in a different pose, with the original colours badly abraded through cleaning.'[38] The fictive bronze patina of the Bardini *Baptist* no longer exists and, therefore, its age can no longer be assessed; however, perhaps the colouring really was as old as Bardini believed. It does seem possible that the bronze imitation layer, as with the Wallace specimen, was

consistent with the intent of a ‘monochrome’ sculptor from that period working between marble and metal.

In comparison with its present state, photographs from when the *Baptist* was with Bardini reveal – together with a suggestive, but later, gilded metal halo that has since been removed – two small integrated gaps: one of the rock (a lower corner on the front) and one of the right hand (the index finger and half of the bowl). The wooden platform in the form of a rock, which stands largely underneath the terracotta group, has been preserved, and it looks like a beautiful addition from the Baroque period.

Francesco Caglioti

Figure 1. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Saint John the Baptist in the Desert*. Terracotta, *c.*1510. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence

Figure 2. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Saint John the Baptist*.
Terracotta, *c.*1505. © Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota, The John R. Van Derlip Fund

Figure 3. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Knight Trampling a Conquered Foe*. Terracotta, *c.*1505–10. © Museo Horne, Florence

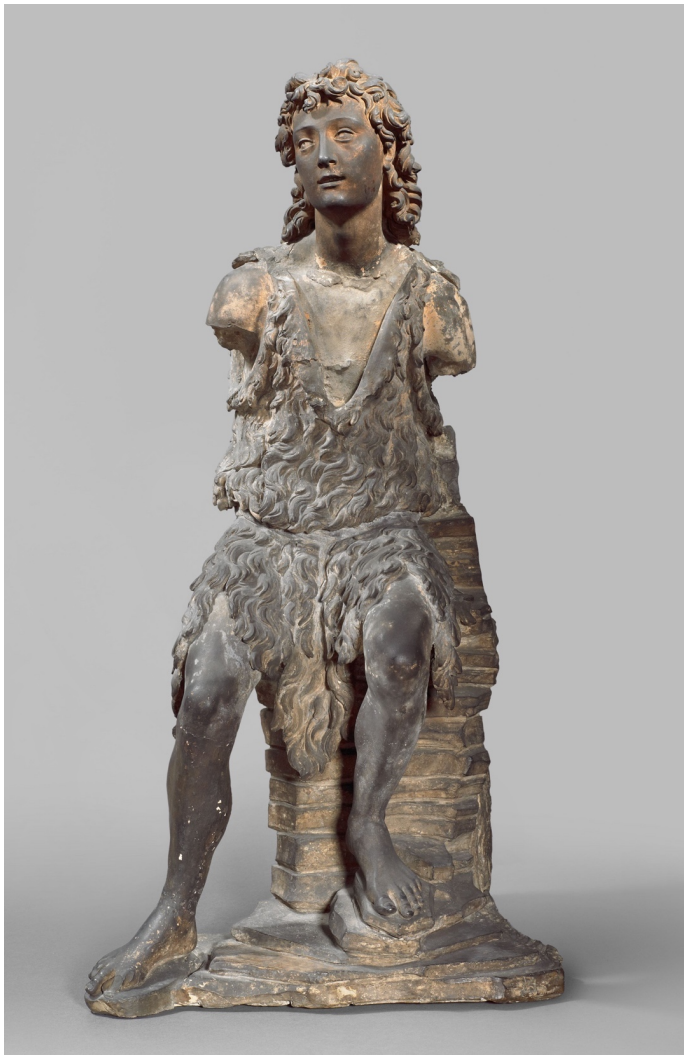

Figure 4. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Saint John the Baptist in the Desert*. Terracotta, *c.*1506–10. The Wallace Collection, London
© Bridgeman Images

Figure 5. Follower of Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Seated Saint John the Baptist*. Painted terracotta, *c.*1510–15. © Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri (Mark S. Weil Artwork 2011 Irrevocable Trust, promised gift of Phoebe Dent Weil and Mark S. Weil 2016.44)

Figure 6. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Head of Saint John the Baptist*. Terracotta, *c.*1510. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Figure 7. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Bust of a Young Man*. Terracotta, *c.*1505–10. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence
© Photographic Department of the Uffizi Galleries, Florence

Figure 8. Workshop of Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Boy with Thorn* (*Spinario*). Terracotta, *c.*1505. Musée Jacquemart-André – Institut de France, Paris
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Figure 9. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Neptune*.
Bronze, *c.*1537–40. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, lent by the National Trust

Figure 10. Benedetto da Rovezzano, *Candle-bearing Angel for the Tomb of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, then of King Henry VIII.*
Bronze, about 1524–9. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Footnotes

[1] See L. Principi, *Il Maestro dei bambini turbolenti: Sandro di Lorenzo scultore in terracotta agli albori della Maniera*, Perugia, 2020 (with further bibliography).
[2] Florence, Historical Archives of the Estate of Ugo Bardini, Amministrazione, 36, Doc. attività commerciale, 1899–1903.
[3] *Catalogue des objets d'art, antiques du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance provenant de la collection Bardini de Florence dont la vente aura lieu chez Mr. Christie . . . le 27 Mai 1902*, 2 vols, Paris, 1902, vol. [1], p. 91, no. 559, and vol. [2], pl. 43; *Catalogue of a Choice Collection of Pictures and Other Works of Art, Chiefly Italian, of Mediaeval and Renaissance Time, the Property of Signor Stephano Bardini of Florence . . .* , Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 1902, p. 88, no. 554 (note the difference in the lots numbers for the same item between the French and English editions).
[4] I. B. Supino, *Catalogo del R. Museo Nazionale di Firenze (Palazzo del Potestà)*, Rome, 1898, p. 412, no. 163.
[5] W. Bode, 'Ein Florentiner Thonbildner vom Anfang der Hochrenaissance'*, Zeitschrift fűr bildende Kunst*, n.s., 13, 1901–2, pp. 1–4; W. Bode, *Florentiner Bildhauer der Renaissance*, Berlin, 1902, pp. 314–15, and 316, fig. 139; ibid., 2nd edn, Berlin, 1910, pp. 310–11 and fig. 166; ibid., 3rd edn, Berlin, 1911, pp. 310–11 and fig. 166; ibid, 4th edn, Berlin, 1921, pp. 303–4 and fig. 187. For the *Aristaeus* by Pieratti, see F. Caglioti, 'Il 'San Giovannino' mediceo di Michelangelo, da Firenze a Úbeda', *Prospettiva*, 145, 2012, pp. 2–81.
[6] See F. Caglioti, 'Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, dit Benedetto da Rovezzano . . ., *Saint Jean-Baptiste . . .*, vers 1500–1510', in *D'Agostino di Duccio à Caffieri*, exh. cat., Paris, 2012, pp. 22–7.
[7] C. von Fabriczy, 'Kritisches Verzeichnis toskanischer Holz- und Tonstatuen bis zum Beginn des Cinquecento', in *Jahrbuch der königlich preuszischen Kunstsammlungen*, 30, 1909, *Beiheft*, pp. 1–88: p. 40, no. 141.
[8] J. Pope-Hennessy and R. Lightbown, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 3 vols, London, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 191–6, nos. 169–76, and vol. 3, pp. 136–7, figs 180–87.
[9] C. Gamba, 'Il palazzo e la raccolta Horne a Firenze', *Dedalo*, 1, 1920, pp. 162–185: p. 176; C. Gamba, *Il Museo Horne a Firenze: catalogo*, Florence, 1961, pp. 43–4, no. 47, reproduced.
[10] U. Middeldorf, 'New Attributions to G. F. Rustici', *Burlington Magazine*, 66, 1935, pp. 70–81: pp. 76–81 and notes 35–8; reprinted in U. Middeldorf, *Raccolta di Scritti, That is, Collected Writings*, 3 vols, Florence, 1979–81, vol. 1: *1924–1938*, 1979–80, pp. 199–210: pp. 209–10 and notes 35–8.
[11] G. Gentilini, 'Ignoto maestro fiorentino fra il 1505 e il 1510 (Maestro del San Giovannino), *San Giovannino adolescente, seduto* . . . ', in *La civiltà del cotto: arte della terracotta nell'area fiorentina dal XV al XX secolo*, exh. cat., Florence, 1980, pp. 97–8, no. 2.8; G. Gentilini, '"Maestro del San Giovannino" (Jacopo Sansovino?), *Cavaliere che calpesta un vinto* . . . ', in P. Barocchi (ed.), *Il Giardino di San Marco: maestri e compagni del giovane Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Milan, 1992, pp. 150–53, no. 37.
[12] B. Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, 2 vols, New Haven and London, 1991, vol. 1, pp. 6–7 and notes 27–9 (p. 246), and vol. 2, pp. 313–14, nos. 1–2, and figs 9–12; B. Boucher, 'Ascribed to Jacopo Sansovino . . ., *Seated St. John the Baptist* . . .', in B. Boucher et. al. (eds), *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, exh. cat., New Haven and London, 2001, pp. 154–5, no. 24.
[13] F. Caglioti, 'Il perduto 'David mediceo' di Giovanfrancesco Rustici e il 'David' Pulszky del Louvre', *Prospettiva*, 83–4, 1996, pp. 80–101: p. 92, note 76 (p. 101); F. Caglioti, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England: New Light on the Cardinal Wolsey–Henry VIII Tomb', in C. M. Sicca Bursill-Hall and L. A. Waldman (eds), *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors*, New Haven and London, 2012, pp. 177–202: pp. 193–5 and note 61 (p. 202), and figs 65–7; Caglioti, 'Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, dit Benedetto da Rovezzano'.
[14] F. Schottmüller, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Bildwerke des Kaiser-Friedrich-Museums. Die italienischen und spanischen Bildwerke der Renaissance und des Barocks*, vol. 1: *Die Bildwerke in Stein, Holz, Ton und Wachs: Zweite Auflage*, Berlin, 1933, pp. 148–9, no. 5011.
[15] A. Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 10: *La scultura del Cinquecento. Parte 1*, Milan, 1935, p. 72 note 1, and p. 74, fig. 62.

[16] Schottmüller, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, pp. 146–7. For Middeldorf, see note 10.
[17] L. Planiscig, 'Toscanische Plastiken des Quattrocento (unbekannte Werke Francesco di Giorgios und Andrea del Verrocchios)', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien,* 39 (= n.s. 3), 1929, pp. 73–90: pp. 83–4 and notes 26–7, and figs 85–6.
[18] M. Weinberger, 'A Bronze Statuette in the Frick Collection and its Connection with Michelangelo', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, s. 6, 39, 1952, pp. 103–14, 144–6. For the attribution to Francesco di Giorgio, see *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue of the Works of Art in the Collection of Henry Clay Frick*, vol. 5: *Sculpture of the Renaissance and Later Periods, Numbers 1–37*, New York, 1953, pp. 17–20, no. 8, and pl. VIII; G. Amato, 'Nuove considerazioni su alcune sculture di Francesco di Giorgio', *Prospettiva*, 172, 2018, pp. 18–41: pp. 27–32 and notes (pp. 38–41), and pp. 34–9, figs 23–9.
[19] G. Gentilini, 'Master of the San Giovannino Statuettes, Identified as Benedetto da Rovezzano . . . ', in A. Bacchi (ed.), *A Taste for Sculpture: Marble, Terracotta and Ivory (16th to 20th Centuries). Catalogue*, exh. cat., London, 2014, pp. 6–13, nos. 1 and 2.
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[21] Caglioti, 'Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, dit Benedetto da Rovezzano', p. 25.
[22] Warren, *The Wallace Collection*, vol. 1, p. 62 and notes 9, 10 and 20 (p. 66).
[23] J. W. Mann, 'Italian, 16th century, Florence, *Seated Saint John the Baptist* . . . ', in J. W. Mann and Elizabeth Wyckoff (eds), *Learning to See: Renaissance and Baroque Masterworks from the Phoebe Dent Weil and Mark S. Weil Collection*, exh. cat., St. Louis, Mo., 2017, pp. 230–33, no. 73.
[24] Boucher, 'Ascribed to Jacopo Sansovino'.
[25] Cf. Pope-Hennessy and Lightbown, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture*, vol. 1, p. 196, no. 176, and vol. 3, p. 137, fig. 187.
[26] Gentilini, 'Ignoto maestro fiorentino', p. 97; Gentilini, 'Maestro del San Giovannino', p. 152 and fig. 71; Boucher, *Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*.
[27] For Berlin, see Bode, 'Ein Florentiner Thonbildner', p. 4 and fig. 3; Schottmüller, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, pp. 146–7, no. 171. For Seattle, see https://art.seattleartmuseum.org/objects/24778/saint-jerome-and-the-lion.
[28] Cf. L. Pagnotta, *Giuliano Bugiardini*, Turin 1987, esp. p. 195, no. 8, and pp. 211–12, no. 45, figs 8 and 45.
[29] M. Aronberg Lavin, 'Giovannino Battista: A Study in Renaissance Religious Symbolism', *Art Bulletin*, 37, 1955, pp. 85–101; M. Aronberg Lavin, 'Giovannino Battista: A Supplement', *Art Bulletin*, 43, 1961, pp. 319–26.
[30] See Caglioti, 'Il 'San Giovannino' mediceo di Michelangelo', for all.
[31] Schottmüller, *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, p. 9, no. 1793 (as 'Donatello?'); Clarence Kennedy, personal communication to F. Schottmüller, ibid. (as perhaps Desiderio); N. Rowley, 'Johannes der Täufer, Büste, Entstehungsort stilistisch: Florenz . . ., Circle of Desiderio da Settignano', in *SMB-digital: Online-Datenbank der Sammlungen,* 2016.
[32] Caglioti, 'Il 'San Giovannino' mediceo di Michelangelo'.
[33] Gentilini, 'Ignoto maestro fiorentino', p. 98.
[34] Caglioti, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England', pp. 193–5 and note 61 (p. 202), and figs 65–7; Caglioti, 'Benedetto di Bartolomeo Grazzini, dit Benedetto da Rovezzano'.
[35] Caglioti, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England'.
[36] F. Caglioti, 'Il *David* bronzeo di Michelangelo (e Benedetto da Rovezzano): il problema dei pagamenti', in F. Caglioti, M. Fileti Mazza and U. Parrini (eds), *Ad Alessandro Conti (1946–1994)*, Pisa 1996, pp. 85–132.
[37] Caglioti, 'Benedetto da Rovezzano in England'.
[38] *Catalogue des objets d'art . . . provenant de la collection Bardini*, vol. [1], p. 91, no. 559, and vol. [2], pl. 43.

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