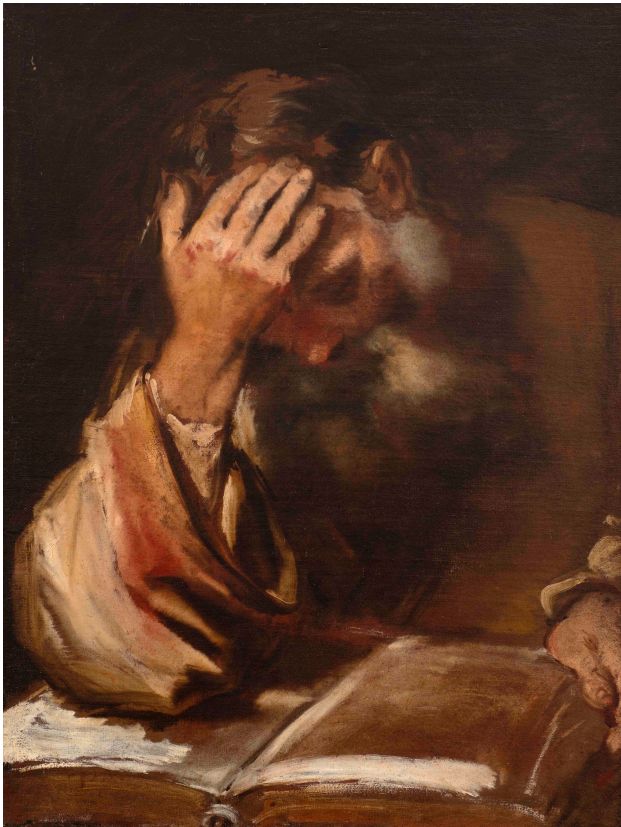


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Federico Barocci
(Urbino, 1535 – 1612)

Man Reading

c. 1605–1607

oil on canvas

65.5 x 49.5 cm

25 3/4 x 19 1/2 in

label printed in red ink (on the reverse):

'Emo / Gio Battist[a]'

Provenance

Collection of Cardinal Antonio Barberini (Inventory 1671: "130 – Un quadro di p.mi 3 1/2 inc.a di Altezza, e p.mi 3 di largha' Con Mezza figura con il Braccio incupido [incompiuto] appoggiato al capo, e nell'altra Un libro, opera di Lodovico [sic] Barocci Con Cornice indorata n° 1-130");

With Galerie Tarantino, Paris, until 2018.

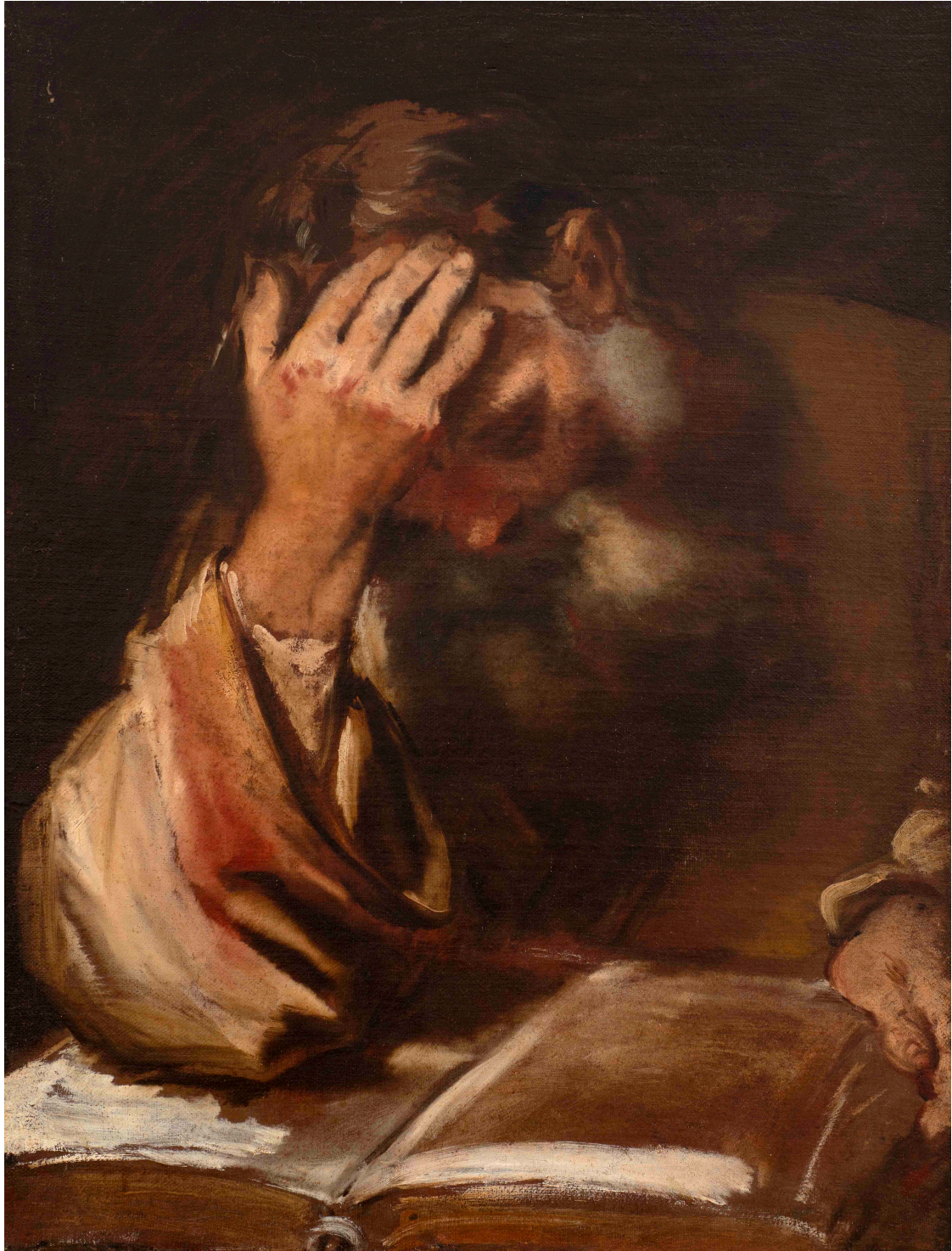
Literature

A. Emiliani, 'Federico Barocci. Etude d'homme lisant', in *Rome de Barocci à Fragonard*, exh. cat., Paris 2013, pp. 18–21, reproduced;

A. Emiliani, *La Finestra di Federico Barocci. Per una visione cristologica del paesaggio urbano*, Bologne, Faenza 2016, p. 118, reproduced.

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Trained in the Mannerist tradition in Urbino and Rome, Federico Barocci demonstrated an astonishing capacity to assimilate the style of great masters from the outset of his career. Extracting the essentials from a pantheon comprising Raphael (1483 – 1520), the Venetians and Correggio (149 – 1534), he perfected an artistic language at once profoundly personal and attuned to the issues raised by the Counter-Reformation. After initial training from Battista Franco (c. 1510 – 1561) and his uncle Bartolommeo Genga (1518 – 1558) in his native Urbino, Barocci went to Rome under the patronage of Cardinal della Rovere and studied Raphael while working with Taddeo Zuccaro (1529 – 1566). During a second stay in Rome in 1563, he was summoned by Pope Pius VI to help decorate the Casino del Belvedere at the Vatican, but in the face of the hostility his success triggered on the Roman art scene he ultimately fled the city – the immediate cause, it was said, being an attempted poisoning by rivals, the consequences of which were felt by Barocci for the rest of his life. Withdrawing definitively to his home town and travelling only occasionally, he nonetheless enjoyed a great reputation with various religious orders which, together with the patronage of the Duke of Urbino, earned him commissions from major cities all over Italy.

While the *Visitation* painted for the Oratorians of the Chiesa Nuova in 1586 established Barocci's standing in Rome, imitators like Antonio Viviani (1560 – 1620) and Andrea Lilio (1555 – 1642) ensured the popularity of his style in the years that followed. Late in life Barocci's reputation in Rome was considerable and Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini, for once setting aside the sensibilities of his protégé Giuseppe Cesari (1568 – 1640) – the Cavaliere d'Arpino, as the painter was also known – went to him for an altarpiece for the family chapel in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. The commissioning of the *Communion of the Apostles* (also known as the *Institution of the Eucharist*, fig. 1) was arranged by Francesco Maria II della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, but the work's gestation was long and laborious, mainly because of the artist's poor health. Barocci first had to overcome the problem of fitting so many figures into the vertical format imposed by the narrowness of the chapel, then modify the composition in light of papal emendations. Bellori reports that in the first presentation drawing, now at Chatsworth House, the Pope saw Satan, whispering in Judas's ear, as placed too close to Jesus. He also demanded that the scene take place at night, in accordance with historical truth; this requirement was met by

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the modification of the *chiaroscuro* in the second presentation drawing (The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

It was only in the final phase of the work's development that Barocci introduced the figure of the prophet on the right, in a melancholic pose (fig. 2). This is a literal – but reversed – citing of the Heraclitus in Raphael's *School of Athens* (fig. 3), for which Michelangelo (1475 – 1564) had been the model a century earlier. This late addition was either inspired or directly prepared by the *Man Reading* study, which was probably part of the group of studies Barocci kept in his studio until his death.¹

Here the artist's virtuosity reaches its culmination in a painting made stunning by its economy of colour and fluency of brushwork, and whose expressiveness equals the powerfully gripping effect the study has on the viewer. This degree of *sprezzatura* is rare except in late Titian works and somewhat anticipates that of Rembrandt – bearing in mind that in Barocci's case it also results from his work with pastel. The "rubbed" look makes the *sfumato* of the contours and the blending of the brushstrokes similar to the graphic technique Barocci innovated. *Man Reading* is a distillation of what Baglione called his "*maniera sì bella, sfumata, dolce e vaga*". It is, too, the epitome of his devotional art, and the concentrated emotional charge ensures that the viewer feels empathy towards the subject.

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Figure 1. Federico Barocci, *Communion of the Apostles*, 1608.
Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva

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Figure 2. Federico Barocci, *Communion of the Apostles* (detail)



Figure 3. Raffaello Sanzio, *The School of Athens* (detail), 1509 – 1510.
The Vatican, Rome

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Footnotes

¹ "Vi sono da quattordici teste colorite a olio di mano del S. Baroccio, di vecchi, di donne, di giovani, e da vintotto altri pezzi di carte colorite a olio di cose diverse"; from the post-mortem inventory quoted by E. Calzini in *Studi e notizie su federico Barocci, a cura della Brigada urbinata degli amici dei monumenti*, Florence 1913, doc. 1.