

A watercolor illustration featuring classical statues and architectural elements. On the left, a large winged statue (likely Nike) stands holding a long staff or spear. To its right, another winged statue (likely Eros or Cupid) is shown in a more dynamic pose. In the background, there are faint sketches of classical buildings and a small statue on a pedestal. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a mix of pastel colors.

Let's go to Europe and Draw

By Peggy Macnamara

Layout by Michelle Flitman

In these months of “being restricted” I thought it might be fun to take a short art tour in Europe; London, Paris and Rome to begin... maybe Assisi and Madrid... we’ll see. Rather than with film or photography, I thought you might enjoy seeing art as I saw it through my drawings.

These experiences/drawings/paintings are the result of yearly excursions. I would spend the whole day in a museum and sink into, and completely commune with an artist from the past.

The tradition of drawing sculpture began in the Renaissance when this Greek masterpiece, “*Laocoon*” which was unearthed in Rome. Michelangelo did many drawing from this sculpture, which is now in the Vatican Museum. I am proud to be part of his tradition. I’ve been drawing from sculpture for 30 years. I think now is the time to *share this experience!*

**Info in the Appendix*



INTRODUCTION:

Drawing & painting nature, art sculpture etc.

Years ago I was painting in the Bird exhibit at the Field Museum when a young girl, maybe 10 years old, came up beside my chair and stood very still. I balance a portfolio with my paper on my lap. So my set up is simple. People respectfully surround me all the time. I barely notice visitors but there was intensity about this viewer. She hardly moved and remained so for about 10 minutes. She was staring right at me. (Most onlookers are mesmerized by the drawing process and keep their eyes on my paper while they tell me about their absolute inability to draw) But this girl just stared. Finally she said, "I want to be you!"

I have been drawing in museums for forty years. It began as a daily vacation from my growing family. It continued as I developed as an artist and it became a base for my scientific work, teaching, writing and watercolor studies. I found that my studio in a natural history museum enabled me to learn from nature, contribute to science and education, surround myself with a group of passionate kindred spirits as well as teach and pass on my experiences to lots of students. My life in the Field Museum grew after awhile when I began visiting (and drawing in) all kinds of museums. I went not just to visit but also to sit and draw for hours at a time. First I visited the main museums in the US and then Europe returning to my favorites over and over again.

I teach at the School of the Art Institute. My class is titled "Scientific Illustration" but the more accurate title would be "classical drawing." What I teach is how to draw from life, the old Renaissance way. The subjects hold still and you can take as long as you like to get it right. Your eraser is your friend. I emphasize the time element. There is no extra credit for doing it quickly. No work of art was ever heralded for quick execution. My class runs from 9am until 4pm, so there is plenty of time. One student worked on a skull drawing and stipple for all 14 weeks. Yesterday was the second class of the semester. One especially eager design student said to me at the end of the day. "I was pretty frustrated all day (he worked on a bat study) but it is the best day of my week." That is a unanimous response to careful observational drawing. You get lifted up, carried into a zone.

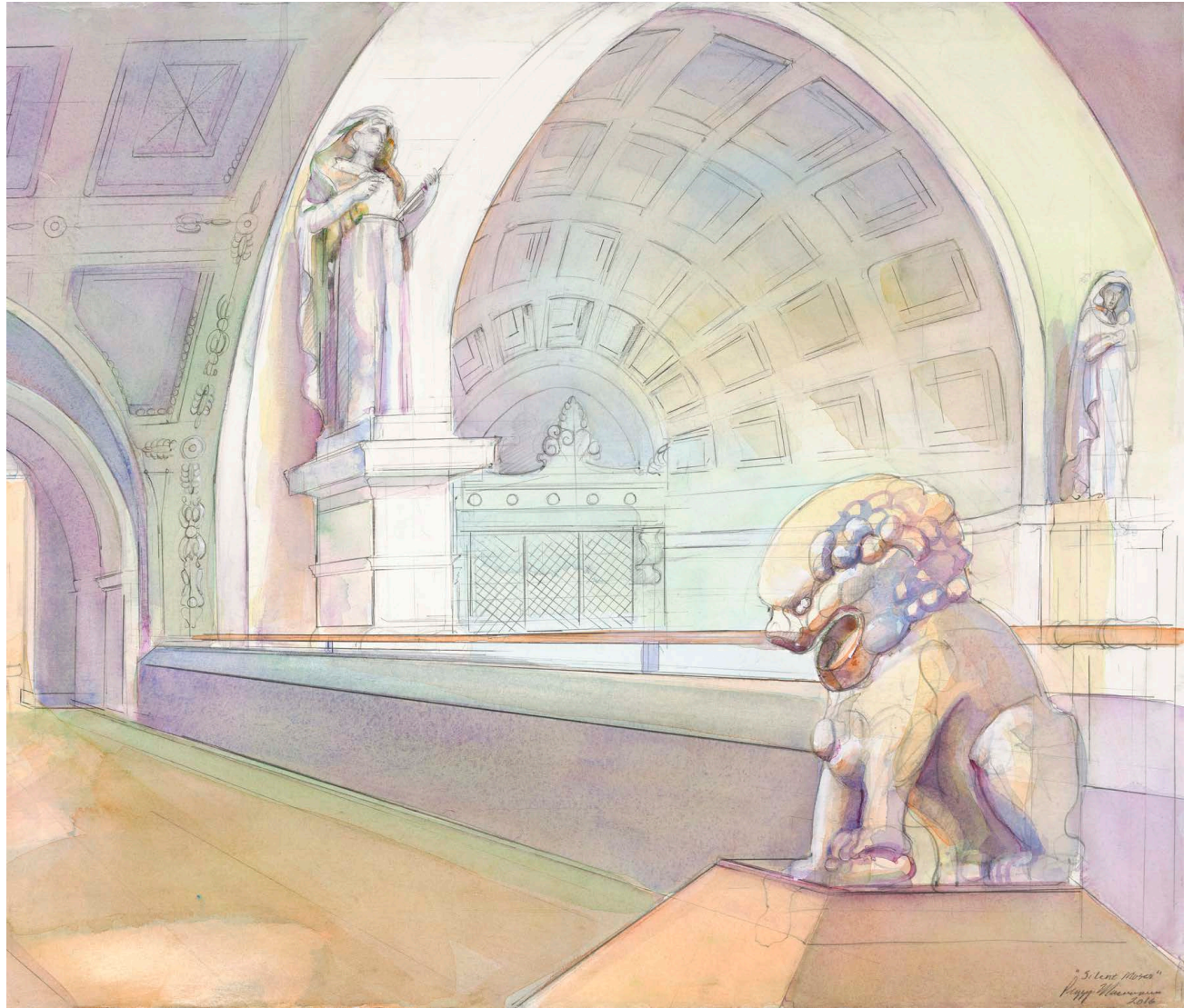
Now I didn't just wake up one day and say, I think I will draw in museums for the rest of my life. Instead, like most *ideas*, it developed over time. I let family and the circumstance have a say. Rather than see family or job as a deterrent, I find it is helpful to embrace your *situation* and let it be part of the work. To an extent you have chosen your situation right? So it is part of your choices, good or bad. So *let it be*. I first came to the Field *after seeing a painting by Elizabeth Ockwell. She drew all over Europe and her work is inspirational.* Practically speaking the Field was accommodating because they had free parking and allowed teachers in with no admittance fee. I thought I would make it my studio for a while. I had five kids at home (5,4,3,2,1,) and working in my unheated third floor was becoming increasingly difficult. *Much like many of your situations today!!* So I got a little help and off I went to the Field to paint the Hoffman sculptures. I figured I could do a good figure drawing if I had a model that didn't move for hours. It worked. I never left. I eventually slipped into the china exhibits and then to birds and the rest is history.

After the Field experience I visited the Met in NYC. Walking around a museum for hours doesn't do much for me. It's overwhelming. Instead I like to get lost in one piece. So I bought some supplies and drew at the Met for hours. This began a long line of museum visits in the *United States*. I would beg my sisters to come draw with me so I would have a travelling companion. My sister Dorothea's husband used to ask. "I understand you want to go draw with Peggy, but must it always be in Europe?" Thus began our many visits to wonderful museums in Europe.

So it has been quite an adventure. Solved the problem of "What to paint" and worked like praying; in both you don't understand how it works, but you don't need to understand it, just do it and trust the outcome. Here is my outcome!

It all began at the Field Museum.

I could take all the time necessary to
get it right.

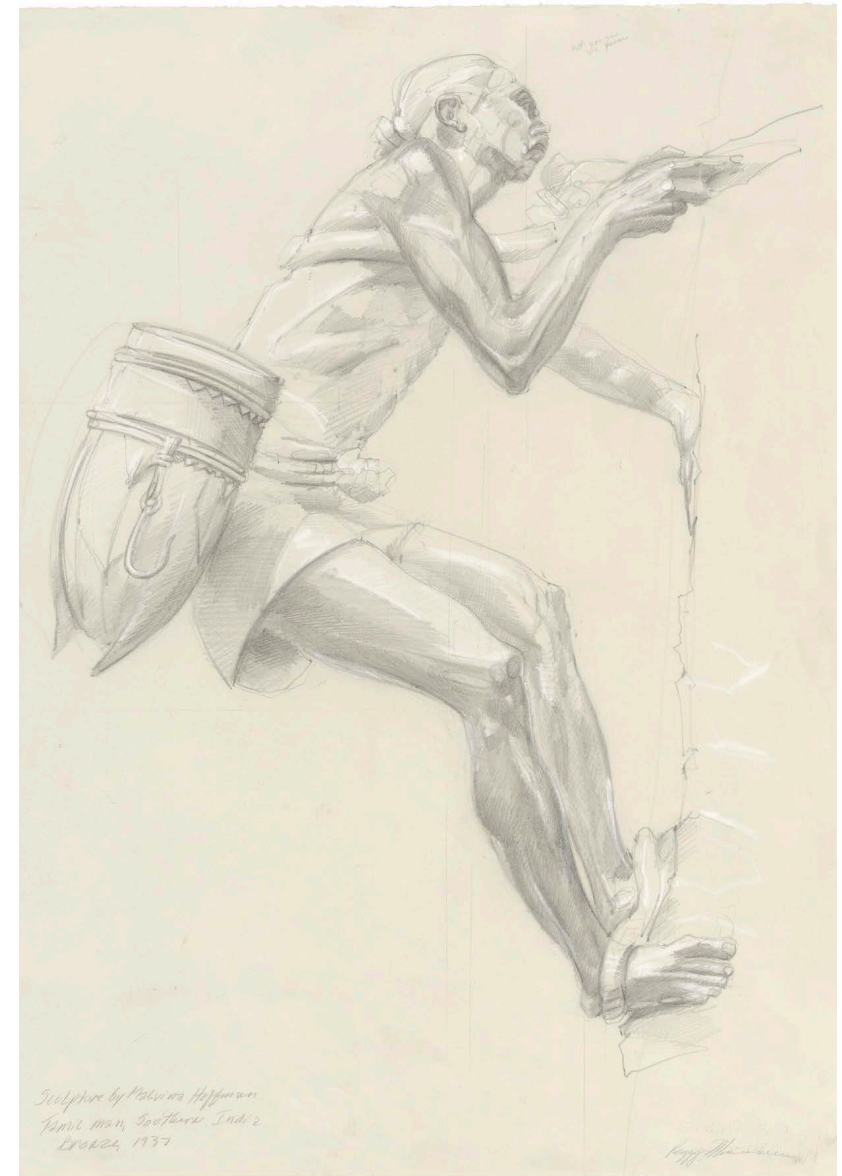


Southeast corner of the Field Museum mezzanine



Malvina Hoffman Sculptures at the Field Museum

I was looking more than thinking. The Art world in the 1980's and 1990's was more about concept, that is building new directions. Sometimes the concept idea woke me up, jolted me, and amused me but it never held my interest. I had just finished graduate school at University of Chicago in Art History. I wanted to carry with me some old traditions; "Do the opposite" as George Castanza would say.



Hoffman Sculpture at the Field Museum

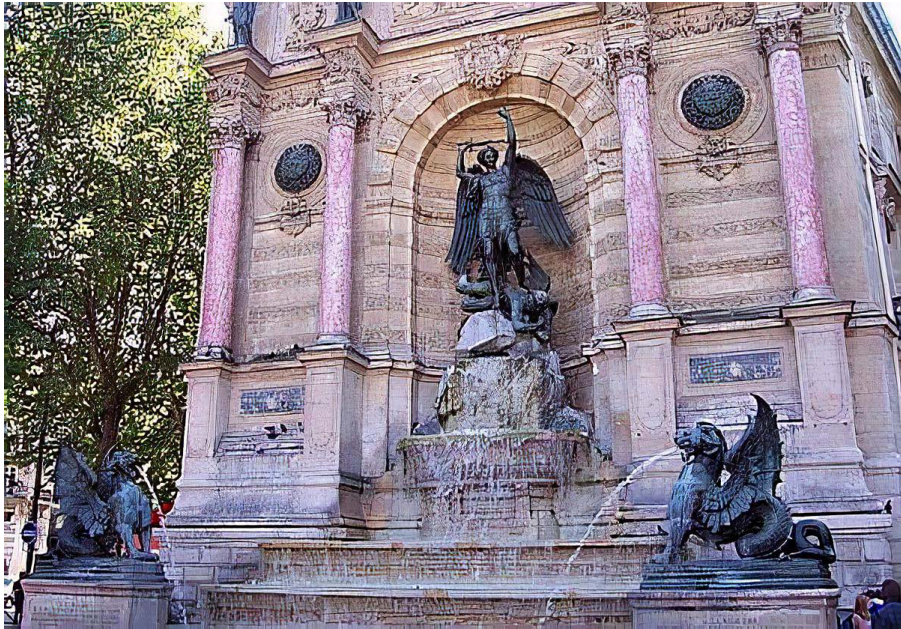


This is a drawing I did in the Met in NYC. After years at the Field I was comfortable with people watching me. I sort of lost consciousness and felt like I was talking to another artist. Yes I visited museums all around the country, both natural history as well as art museums. But lets get to Europe!

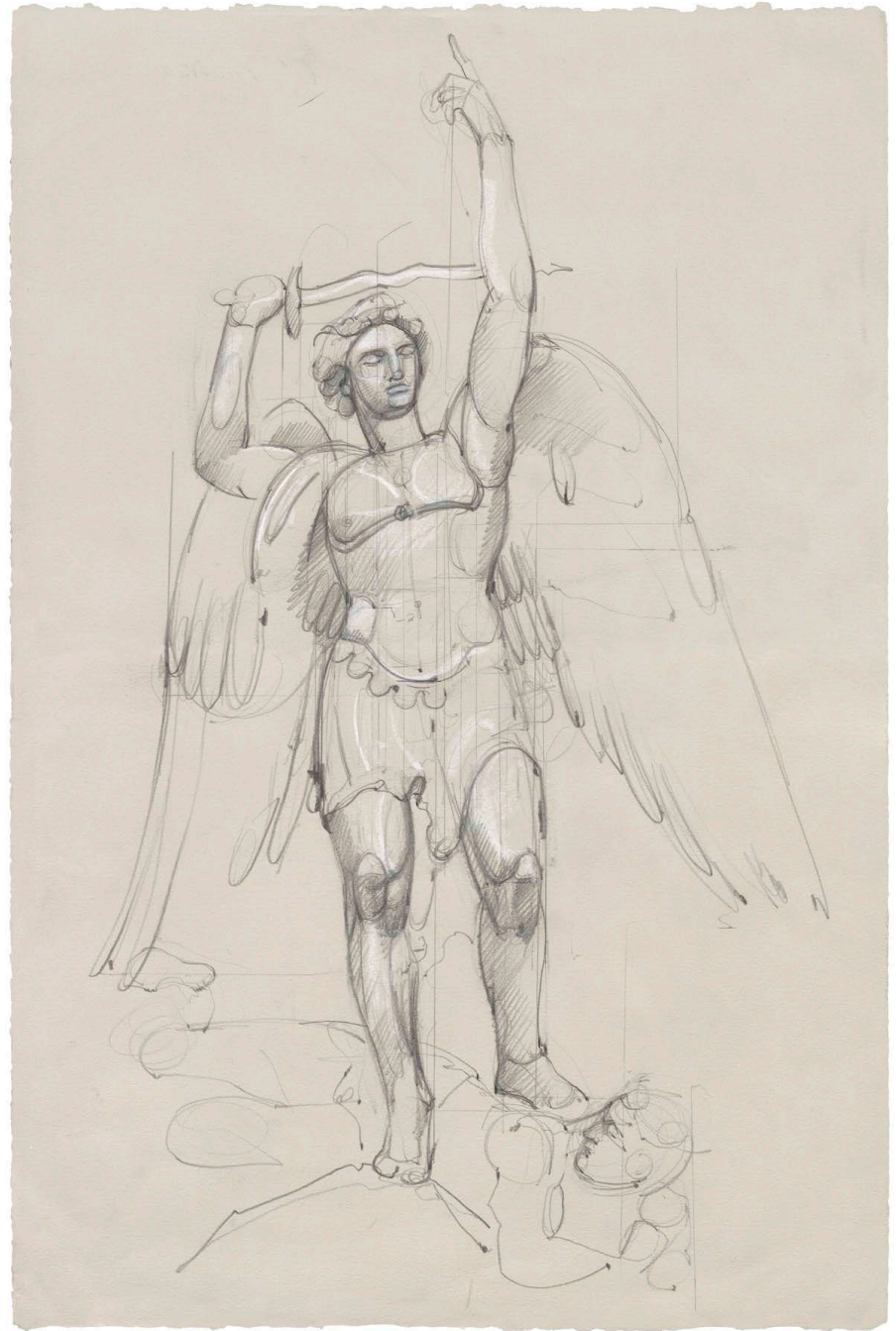
“Ugolino and his Sons”, Metropolitan Museum in NYC.¹

Lets get to Europe and begin outside!

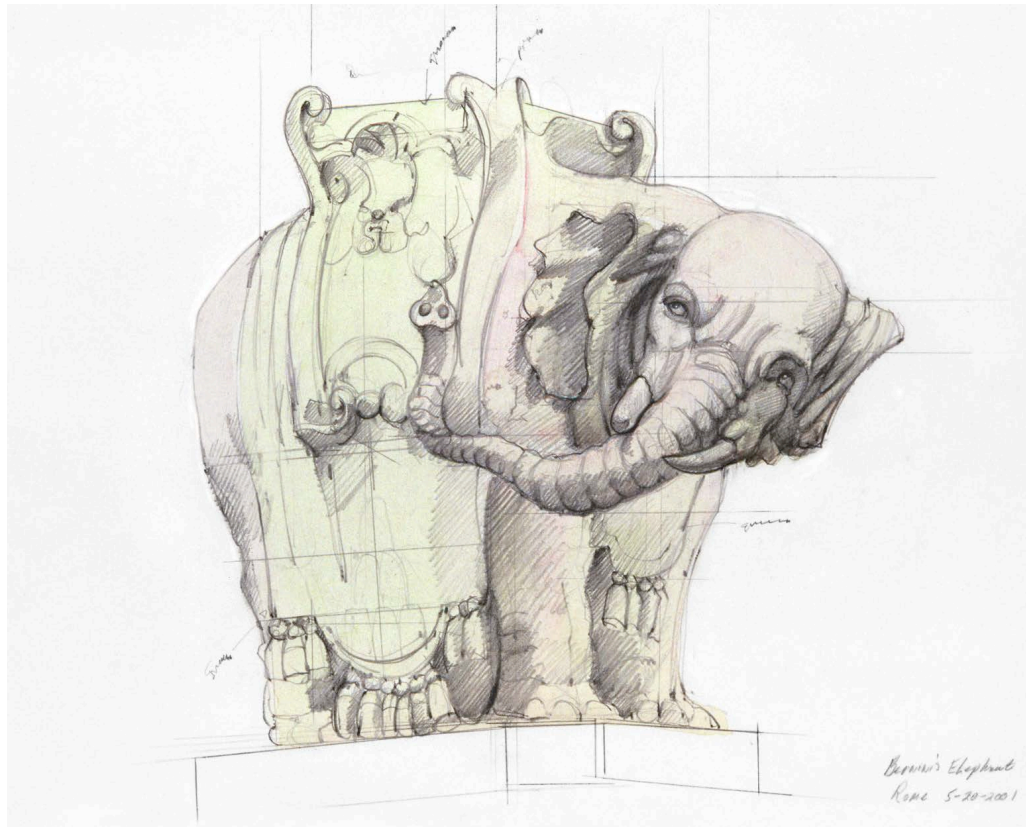
Now when in Europe I wasn't limited to museums. Lots of art is outside and public. And I took advantage of this. St Michael's plaza in Paris.



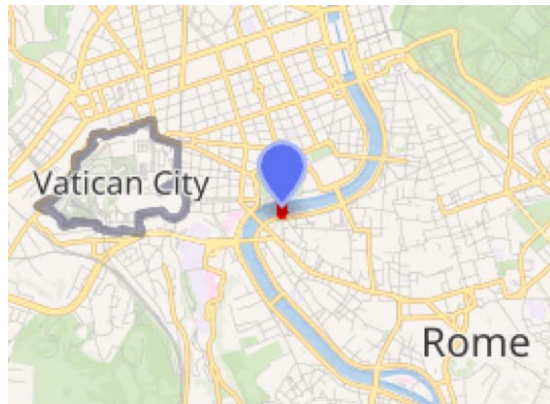
I just sat down on the ground about 50 feet before the statue. People left me alone for a couple of hours, it was Paris, an artist drawing was nothing new.²



I was left alone drawing the Bernini in the plaza del Minerva in Rome.³

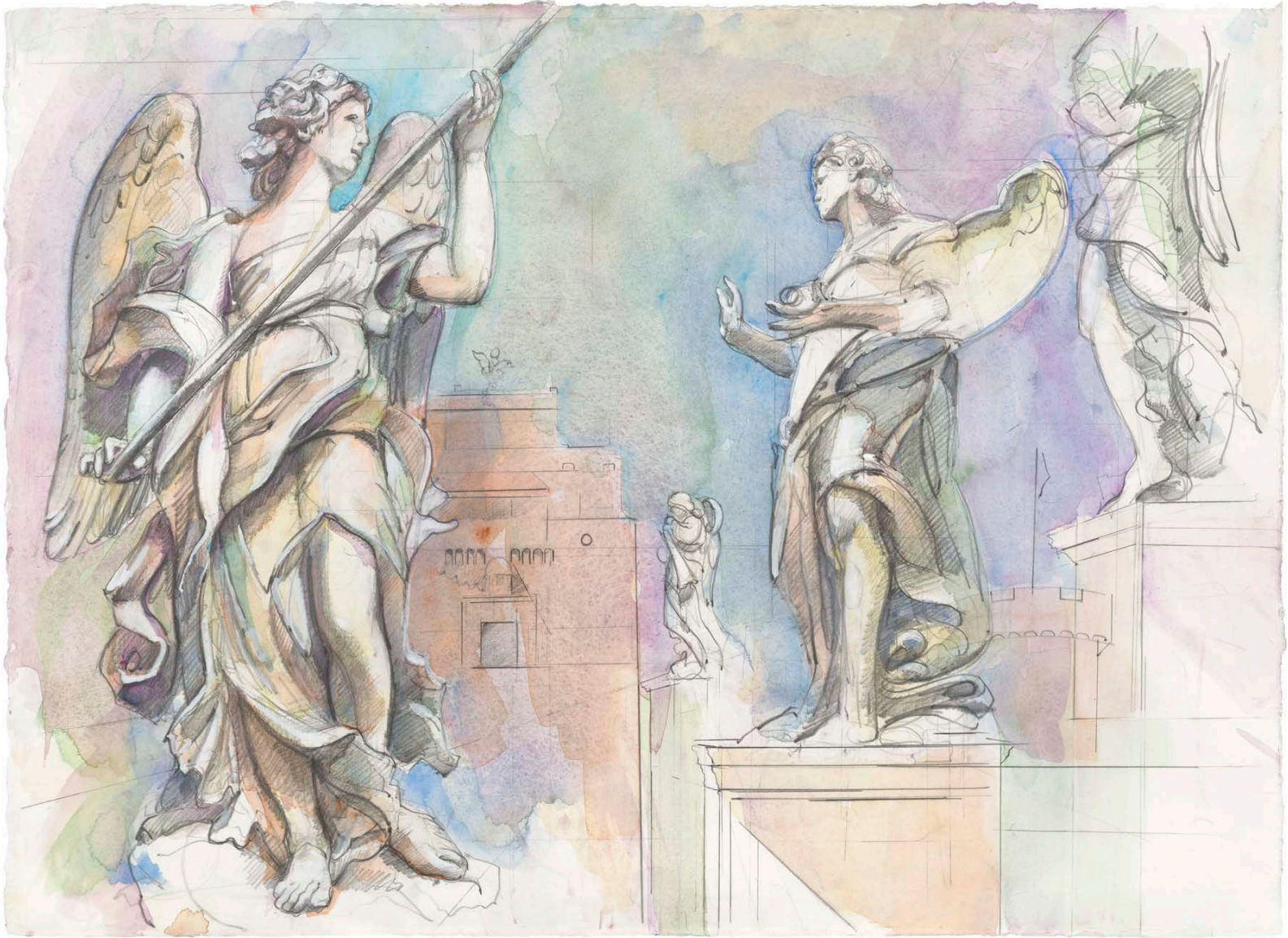


Next we'll go to the Bridge of Angels in Rome.
Bernini's everywhere.⁴



*“Angel with the Superscription” (three views) by Gian Lorenzo Bernini
(Original at Sant’Andrea delle Fratte copy by Giulio Cartari)*

I began these paintings on site and finished them at home.



"Angel with a Lance" Domenico Guidi (left)



Far right Angel with Sudarium (Veronica's Veil) by Cosimo Fancelli.

Far left "Angel with the garment and dice" Paolo Naldini

Now on to the Trevi fountain in Rome! I was in a large crowd. We were all squeezed in around the fountain.⁵





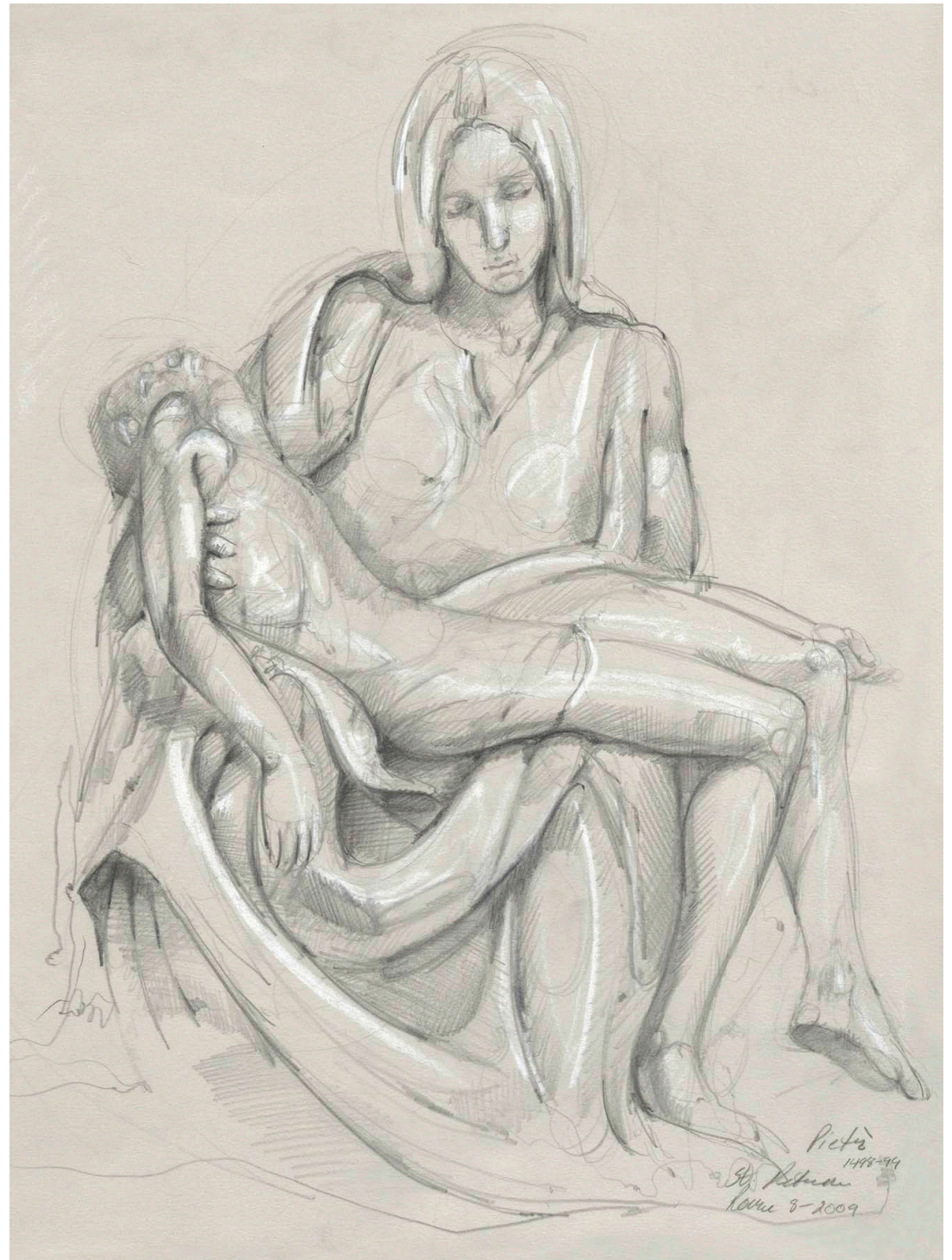
Berlin's Fountain
Vasco Narvaez
8-16-09

Piazza Navona is filled with cafés that will let you sit and draw while you enjoy a cup of tea. I slipped into St. Agnes church which faces the piazza, and drew this.⁶



St. Agnes Church at Piazza Novona

Churches are another great place to draw. Here in St Peter's I was standing in front of Michelangelo's beautiful pieta for hours.⁷



The guard tried to push me away and suggest a photo would do. Obviously not...





Now Bernini's St Theresa in Ecstasy also in St Peter's presented a logistical problem. It was up high, so I just began and finished it from photos.



More Bernini in St Peters. *St. Longinus* (top right)



I walked into a gallery in Rome and there was a Show about Leonardo's inventions. I drew there for a couple of days and then when I got home added Leonardo highlights.⁸

The Borghese Gallery is an hour outside of Rome and his houses this Bernini, "Rape of Proserpina" ⁹

Years ago I was able to sit and draw this Bernini and then add paint at home. When I went in 2018 they rushed the crowds thru and I was unable to draw.



While in Rome it is easy to slip off to Florence and visit the Academia museum where you can see the original "David" and another of Michelangelo's Pietas.¹⁰



Venice is also easy to get to from Rome
and has the Archeological Museum
where I drew this piece.¹¹



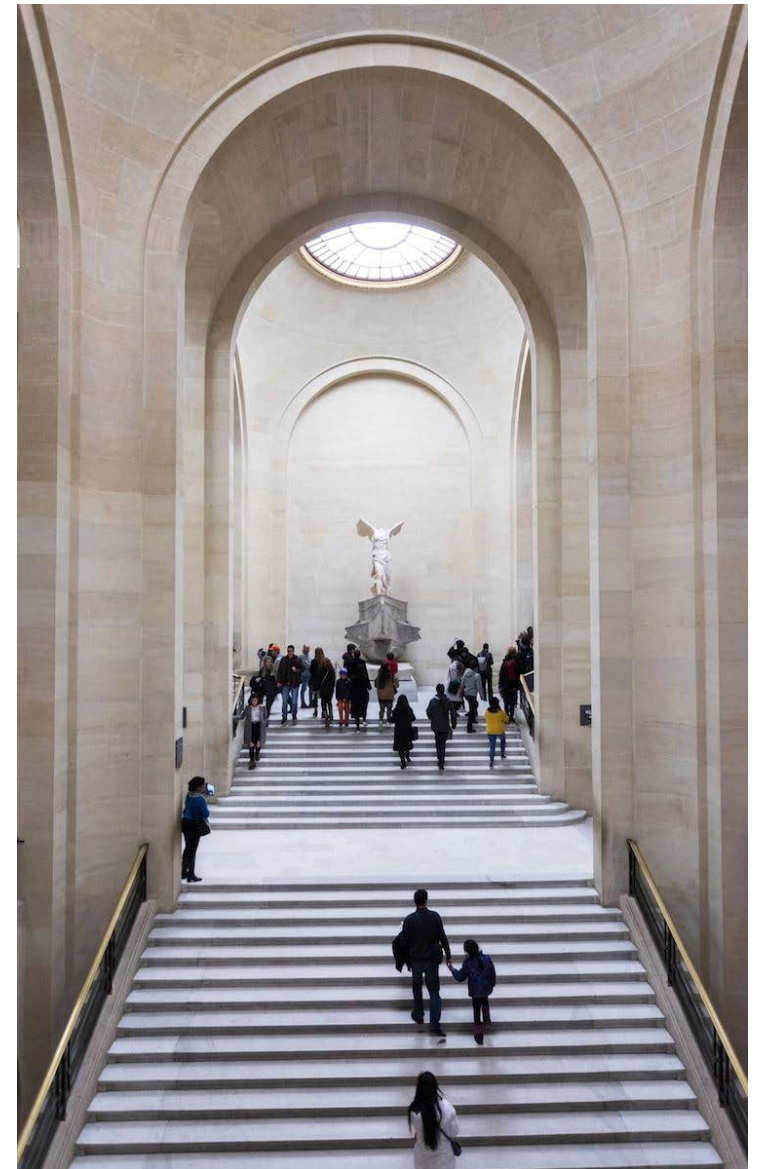
So off to the Louvre!

*When I began years 25 years ago you could just walk into the museum with portfolio and a backpack with pencils etc. The last time I went there were scanners at every entrance and they asked me to cut my portfolio in half.





“Winged Victory of Samothrace”



“Goddess Of Victory” ...Nike in Greek, 2nd century BC

Nike is on a stairwell and is a bit crowded.

...whereas Michelangelo's slaves are in a quiet place where I saw very few visitors all day.¹²



Venus de Milo is another Louvre treasure.¹³





“Crouching Aphrodite”

I eventually started expanding the drawing to the whole area. I would complete the drawing on site and paint at home.



"Cupid sculpture" (lower right) Louvre



"Psyche and Cupid" (center left), Louvre Museum

Another wonderful museum in Paris is the Museum D'orsay.¹⁴ It's much smaller and filled with gems. I did five drawings of Degas's Dancer. While sitting there a group of school children probably only about ten years old surrounded me and said "Arteest" That was definitely a highlight.



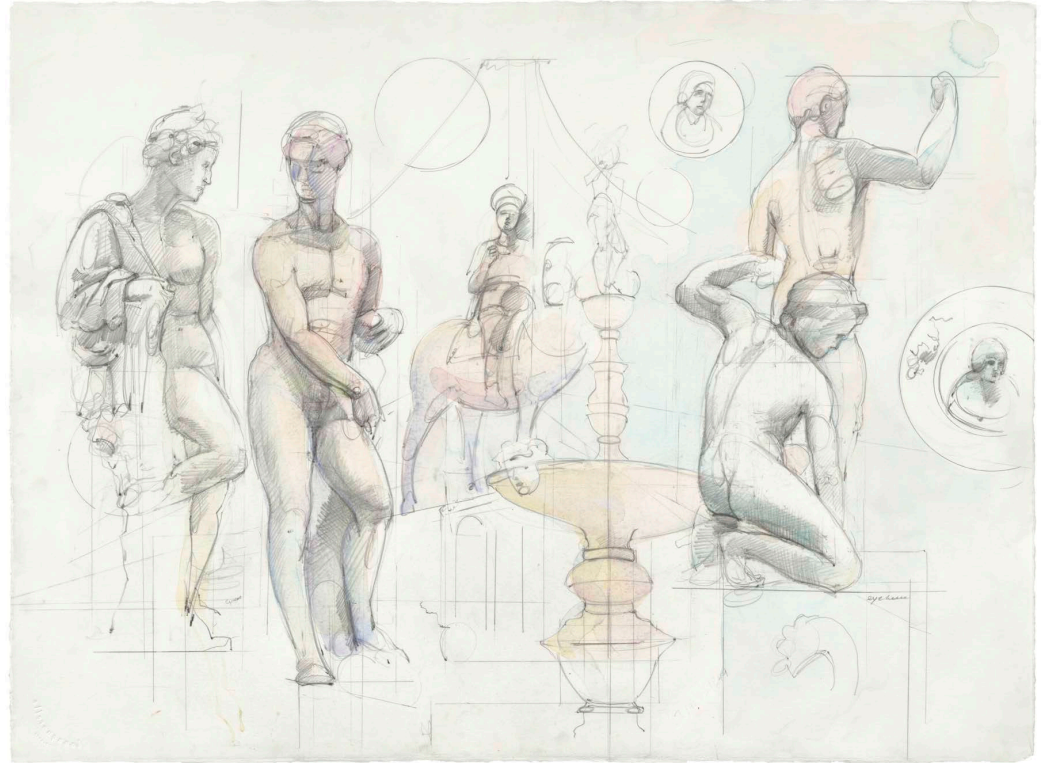


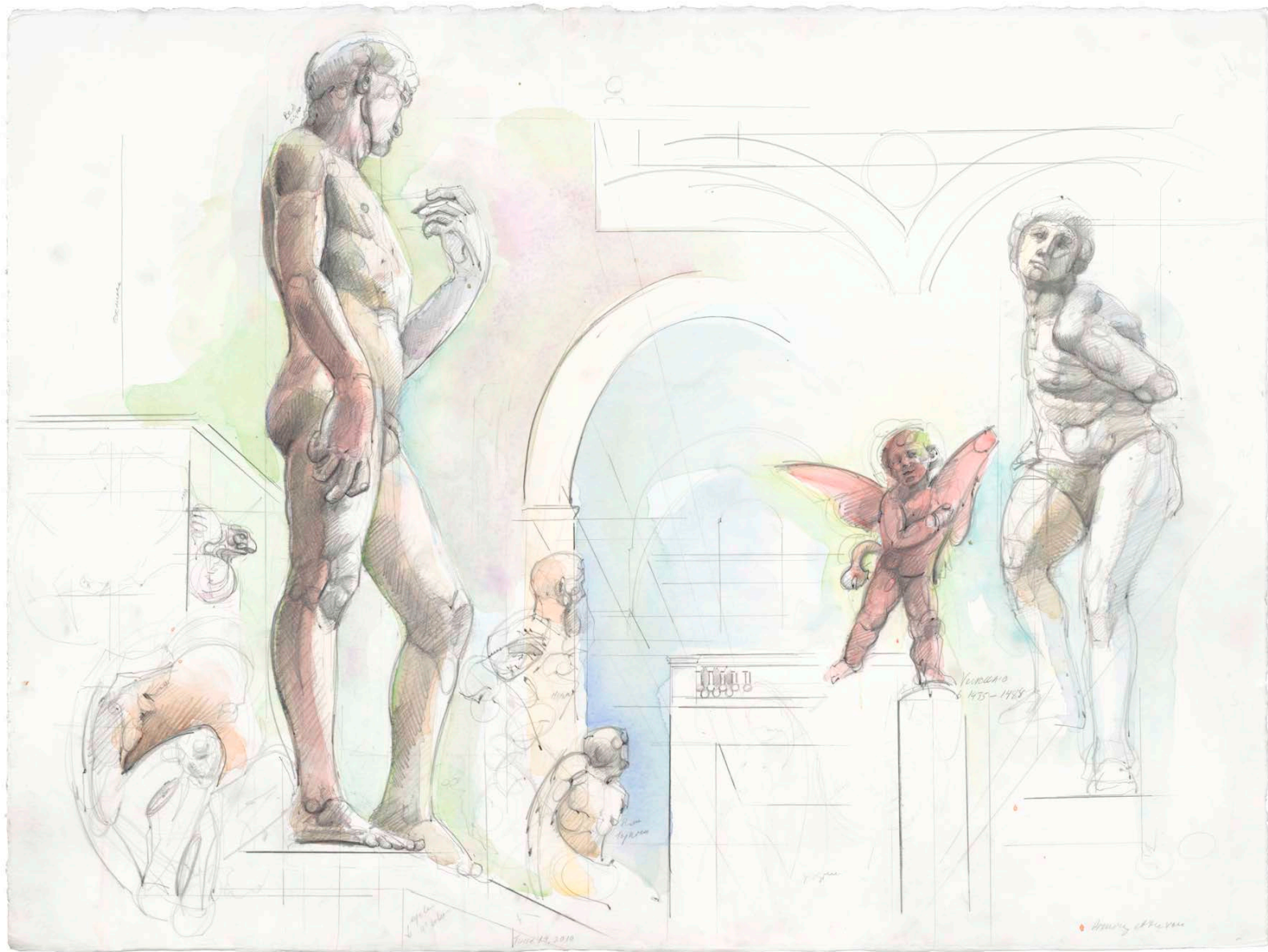
"Susannah and the Elders" by Paul Cabet, marble, 2861.



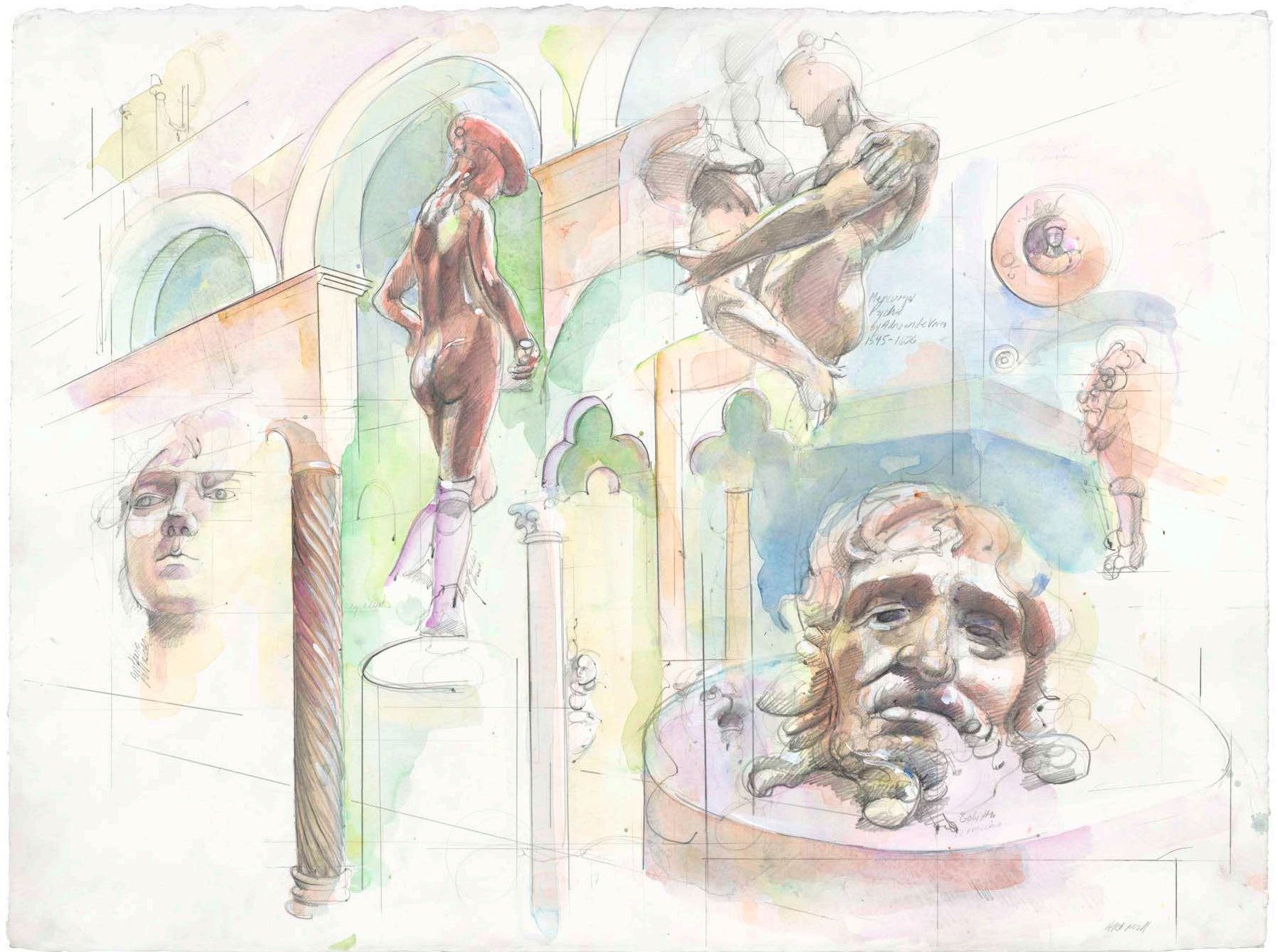
Now on to London:

The easiest place to draw in Europe is the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.¹⁵ It has no entrance fee and there are two large rooms with replicas of all masterpieces. They even provide chairs. Here is some of the work I've done at the V and A.





This view of David also showed Verrocchio's angel and a Michelangelo slave.



It's the juxtaposition of all these masterpieces which makes the Victoria and Albert so magical.



Victoria and Albert also has a replica of this “Moses” by Michelangelo.







This is from the second floor balcony of the Victoria and Albert museum.

Now on to the magnificent British Museum!!! ¹⁶



I came back to this spot over and over again.



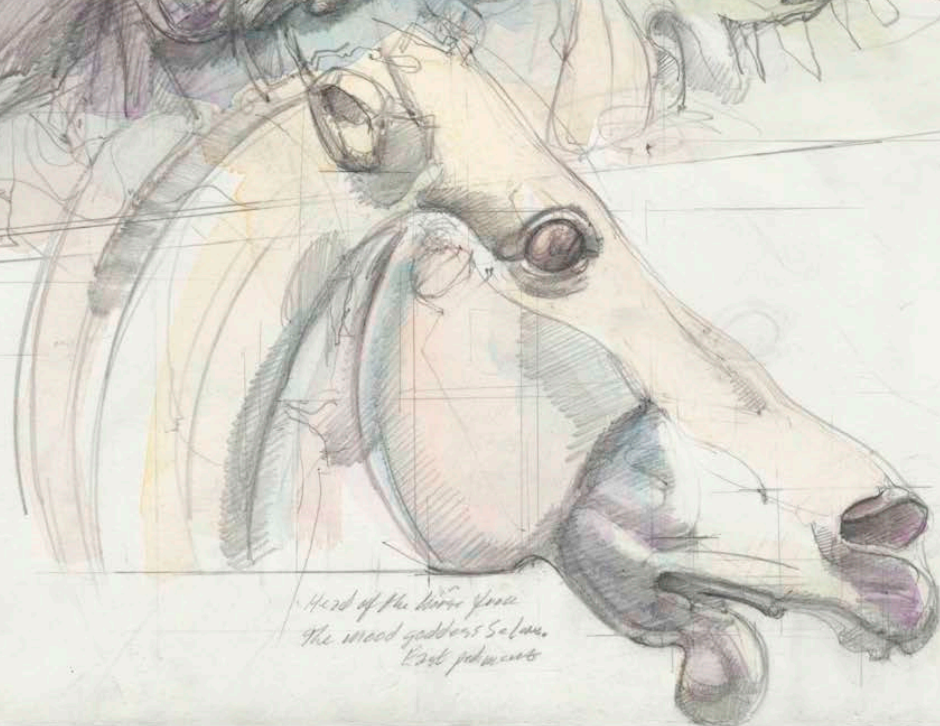
see Dyonis.
daughter of Lorus.

see Dyonis.
daughter of Lorus.
escorting the
dead

March 1910's
From the Dead Monument,
Kathia 390-3800
June 23, 2010 London



Aphrodite, goddess of
Love in the lap of her mother,
Dione. East pediment.
June 14, 2013



Head of the horse from
The wood goddess Selene.
East pediment

Rory Sumner
June 14, 2013 London



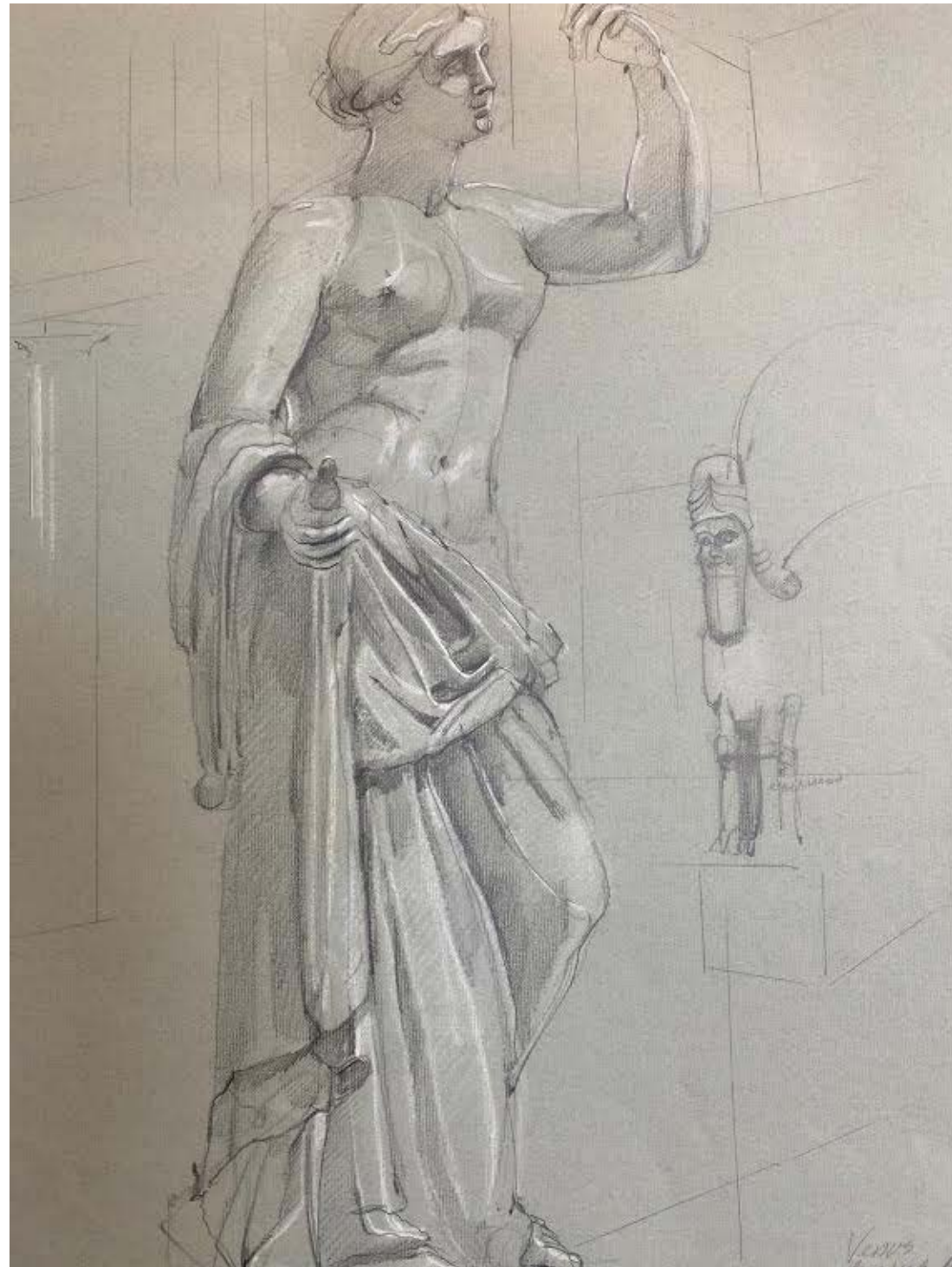
The figure was rectangular in shape
 placed close to the background
 of a large temple
 to make the quality of the figure

Orpheus, the god of music
 the god of love
 the god of war
 the god of the sun
 the god of the moon
 the god of the stars





The Townley "Discobolus"



A couple hours outside of Rome...is Assisi



St Claire in Assisi

Sometimes I sit and draw a part of a building, tree, etc.
and then add the rest of the story when I get home.



St. Francis of Assisi church (top right)

Now off to Madrid Spain.... for St. Teresa of Avila



*Isabel II, Prado Museum in Madrid Spain.*¹⁷

I did this in the Prado in July 2019. It sort of foreshadows our situation now! Good place to take a break.



To be continued

One last puzzle...Can anyone tell me where I did this
“Hercules and Antaeus” and the “Hanging Man”??



APPENDIX

Europe was used to a tradition of visitors studying the masters.

“When the Louvre was first opened to the public in 1793, it set aside five of every ten days exclusively for artists to study and copy its collection... When the first American museums were formed nearly a century later, they adopted the Louvre’s policy; giving artists and students permission to paint or model from the works in their galleries became a fundamental means of museum education. They were mostly copying paintings, learning about Palette choices and composition. Drawing sculpture is an older tradition. As the tenets of modernism finally began to be incorporated into professional art education in the 1930s, copying as a basic learning tool lost ground” (572).

“In the early 1970s, artists and museums in a few locations began to revive copying. Until 1931 the Metropolitan Museum of Art, like many others, had a special room where artists could work from objects of their choosing without being disturbed by the general public” (572).

These systems were about copying painting. What I was interested in was copying the sculpture of the masters. Slowly and carefully. I had no direct end in mind other than becoming a better draftsman. Why a pot of flowers if you could copy a Michelangelo sculpture. Woudnt that be a way to commune with the masters. Really look at that piece that Degas made with his own hands. Degas spent lots of time in museums coping and learning.

The most famous of all classical statues was, and probably still is, the Laocoön, which was dug out of the ground in a Roman vineyard on January 14, 150

The three figures represent the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons struggling against the lethal bites of serpents sent by the God Apollo to punish Laocoön lethal bites of serpents sent by the God Apollo to punish.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, who was in Rome then, working for the pope, was immediately sent to see the new marvel on the recommendation of Pope Julius II, who was passionate about classical sculpture. The pope bought the marble group and placed it in the Vatican, in the Belvedere Courtyard, where artists and amateurs went to see it and study its daring composition. Full-size casts and smaller reditions can be found elsewhere.

Notes

¹ “Ugolino and his Sons,” marble sculpture was made by Baptiste Carpeaux and. It was created in Paris in the 1860’s. Ugolino della Gherardesca was part of the story of Dante’s inferno, he was sentenced to die in a prison with his children.

² Fontaine Saint Michel
Constructed in 1858-1860 by architect Gabriel Davioud, sculpture is the work of French sculptor Francisque-Joseph Duret.

³ Piazza della Minerva: Elephant and Obelisk is the smallest obelisk in Rome. The statue is a sculpture by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The elephant was probably the work of his assistant Ercole Ferrata. The Obelisk was uncovered during excavations.

⁴ Bridge of Angels, Ponte Sant'Angelo was completed in 134 AD by the Emperor Hadrian, but it took on the name of Sant'Angelo in the 6th century because of the legend that an angel appeared in the roof of the castle to pronounce the end of the plague. The bridge had many revisions over the years. Bernini's Program called for ten angels. It was one of the last projects for the bridge. Bernini only finished only two originals... They are actually in the church Sant'Andrea delle Fratte in Rome.

⁵ Trevi Fountain (Fontana di Trevi) designed by architect Nicola Salvi and competed Giuseppe Pannini and several others. Rome's largest and most famous fountains. It's 85 feet high and 65 feet wide. Dates back to ancient Roman times. Has appeared in notable films like "Three coins in the Fountain."

⁶ Piazza Navona is built on the ancient site of the Stadium of Domitian. Centrally located is the Fontana del Quattro Fiumi, the Fountain of four rivers in 1651 by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The Church of St Agnes in Agone by Francesco Borromini, Girolamo Rainaldi, Carlo Rainaldi and others. faces the fountain. It became a public space in the final years of the 15th century.

⁷ St Peter's Basilica in Rome is lavishly decorated with sculptures and reliefs. The church was designed by Donato Bramante, Michelangelo, Carlo Maderno and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. It is

home to Michelangelo's Pieta, Bernini's Ecstasy of St. Teresa and St. Longinus.

⁸ Gallery in Rome exhibiting Leonardo's inventions, Mostra Leonardo Da Vinci, in the Piazza della Cancelleria, Rome Italy.

⁹ Borghese Gallery outside of Rome with beautiful gardens to explore houses. Bernini's "Rape of Proserpina" was executed between 1621 and 1622. Bernini was only 23 yrs old at its completion.

¹⁰ Galleria dell' Accademia in Florence has housed the Original David by Michelangelo since 1873. "The Palestrina Pieta" which has been attributed to Michelangelo is currently questionable.

¹¹ The Louvre: "The Winged Victory of Samothrace," Hellenistic Sculpture of Nike created in the 2nd century BC.

¹² Michelangelo's slaves: The "Dying Slave" and the "Rebellious Slave" created for the tomb of Pope Julius II, in 1513-1516.

¹³ "Venus de Milo" at the Louvre thought to be the work of Alexandros of Antioch. It was created between 130 and 100 BC. It is six feet eight inches high.

¹⁴ Musee d'Orsay is on the left bank of the Seine... There were 5 wax models found in Degas' studio after his death. The sculpture is one third life size and was sculpted in wax. Dressed in a real bodice, slippers and tutu. It was originally showed in the Sixth Impressionist exhibit in 1881 and received mixed reviews. The

original “Little Dancer” is in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC there are 28 versions of the “Little dancer in Museums and galleries around the world. The one in Dorsay is a bronze copy of the clay original.

¹⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum: In 1893 The Cast courts were opened. These rooms display copies of the Worlds most significant works of art. (See below)



Image: René / user “Magdeburg” on Flickr. V&A Museum London. June 7, 2017. <https://flic.kr/p/JkmgUV>

¹⁶ British Museum: The home of the Parthenon Sculptures which were built 2,500 years ago. They were for a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Athena. In 500AD the Parthenon was converted to a church. Lord Elgin, a British ambassador with permission from the Ottoman Empire, removed remaining sculptures from the ruins and brought them to London.

¹⁷ “Isabel II” by Camillo Torreggiani 1819-1896 in the center of a Room in the Prado Museum.

¹⁸ Hercules and Anataeus, classical marble now at the Pitti Palace in in Florence (Given to the Vans A museum)

Bibliography

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Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press, 1978.