In Florence, Raphael exclusively painted portraits and small devotional pictures, and the only large altarpiece that he undertook during these years was the *Madonna del Baldacchino* (Florence, Palazzo Pitti). This range of work implies that the painter had no intention to establish an organized workshop in the town, and Vasari must have been correct to claim that his aim with his visit was to learn and perfect his art.¹ In order to make a living during his sojourn, Raphael needed to find a genre that guaranteed a regular source of income with the least possible investment.

Small devotional pictures, especially those depicting the Virgin and Child, had been in great demand in Florence from the fifteenth century. Their great popularity was enhanced by the custom of presenting them as wedding gifts (*quadri di spose*), but they attracted collectors as well. As devotional pictures were easy to sell and assured a steady earning for painters during periods when they lacked commissions, they were produced in large numbers by artists and assistants, and were traded by art dealers.²

Throughout his career, Raphael had an astonishing ability to establish contacts; in Florence he rapidly gained the support of several prominent families and executed paintings for, among others, the illustrious Taddeo Taddei, Lorenzo Nasi, Domenico Canigniani and Agnolo Doni.³ However, the relatively large number of his unassigned Madonnas suggests that they were often produced not for specific customers but for the open market.

The Virgin and Child, a frequent and favoured subject of artworks also in Umbria, was conceived in a radically different manner by Florentine painters.⁴ Raphael’s fundamental inspiration had been Leonardo, who in the last third of the fifteenth century introduced a completely innovative and exciting approach to this traditional theme. Leonardo’s cartoon for the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist* (London, National Gallery), displayed to the public in 1501, was regarded as a revolutionary work at the time. The pyramidal arrangement of interlocking monumental figures constituted a primary source for Raphael’s Florentine Madonnas.

The delicate rendering of the balanced yet asymmetrical composition of the *Esterházy Madonna* also revealed Raphael’s new awareness of the Leonardesque concept of the Virgin and Child integrated in a pastoral landscape [fig. 41]. Leonardo’s pen drawing,
today at the Royal Collection, Windsor, might have served as a source for the composition [fig. 42].

Although Raphael was faithful to Leonardo's example, the group of the Virgin and Child with the infant John the Baptist on the Windsor sheet was transformed by Raphael into a more mature and sophisticated composition than those of his previous Madonnas. While he followed Leonardo's pyramidal arrangement, Raphael placed the three figures in a spacious landscape, and created a more compact and clear, lively ensemble by the interlocked forms and gestures.

Between 1504 and 1508, Raphael made several drawings for the Virgin and Child, but curiously, only a single compositional study for the Esterházy Madonna has come down to us [fig. 43]. His pen drawing preserved in the Uffizi, Florence, gives the complete image and corresponds almost exactly with the panel. The main differences are that in the painted version, the horizon has been lowered, a river runs across the hills to the left, and the Tuscan landscape has been replaced by classical ruins.

The adjustments were mainly due to the different format of the painting and the drawing. In the preparatory phase documented by the Florence sheet, Raphael must have had a slightly narrower panel in mind. The vertical axis of the drawing has been shifted somewhat to the right in the wider panel, thus the figures have become more loosely tied and the infant John the Baptist placed further from the Virgin. Despite their obvious divergences, the Florence sheet was usually considered as the final cartoon used for the painting, primarily for its close correspondence in detail, almost identical size, and pricked contours.

According to Central Italian practice, the final design of small and medium-sized paintings was realized in a full-scale cartoon (cartone). The contours of these detailed drawings were transferred directly onto the surface of the panel in preparation, by the method of pouncing or tracing. For larger panels, cartoons were sometimes replaced by a smaller modello covered by a grid for the purpose of scaling up the design. In some cases, Raphael only ruled the horizontal and vertical axis on the prepared panel.

During his pre-Roman years, Raphael used detailed cartoons even for his small panels and participated in all stages of the preparatory process of larger altarpieces, from the execution of the cartoon to its transfer onto the panel.

As underdrawing was the last phase in which the painter could easily alter his composition, Raphael paid special attention to the underdrawing of his works, whose execution usually required the participation

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**Leonardo**

*The Virgin and Child with the Infant Baptist, and Heads in Profile*

c. 1478

Pen and brown ink, 405 × 290 mm

Windsor, Royal Collection, 12276

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**Raphael**

*Study for the Esterházy Madonna*

c. 1507–8

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk, squared in stylus, outlines pricked for transfer, 287 × 192 mm

Florence, Uffizi, 539E
Infrared reflectograph of fig. 41

Digital image
The digitally coloured Florence drawing (fig. 43) superimposed on the infrared reflectograph of the Esterházy Madonna (fig. 44)
of assistants. He often continued to elaborate and modify his design on the panel. Raphael never ceased to realize the underdrawing of his works himself, even at the time when he delegated the realization of his paintings partially or entirely to his Roman workshop.

Similarly to cartoons, the Florence drawing was extensively pounced along its outlines and vertical and horizontal axis. However, the infrared reflectograph of the *Esterházy Madonna* detected no traces of spolvero [fig. 44]. In addition, the computer image made by scanning the Florence sheet and layered on top of the infrared reflectograph of the painting clearly reveals that their contours do not exactly correspond and there are significant divergences in the relative position of the figures as well [fig. 45]. It is certain therefore, that the Florence drawing did not serve as the cartoon for the painting.

As seen in the case of *The Massacre of the Innocents*, in order to review his concept during the evolution of his compositions, Raphael frequently pounced or traced resolved details onto another sheet; a sixth of his surviving drawings are either pricked for transfer or drawn over pounce marks. The Uffizi drawing may have been such an intervening study, from which Raphael made a copy, probably in the stage of changing the format of the panel.

The fresh and confident underdrawing also contradicts the view that it may be a mechanical copy from a cartoon. Since the animal glue content of the chalk or gypsum ground allows the metalpoint to leave a distinct mark, Raphael sketched directly onto the panel. The soft and slightly smudgy greyish-black lines suggest that he most possibly used lead or zinc-based metalpoint. The freehand underdrawing is relatively schematic, concentrating primarily on the arrangement of the figures and searching only for the optimum contours. While the painter clearly defined the outlines of the main forms, he omitted the internal modelling of the figures and the indication of the drapery folds. The position of the bandeau held by Saint John the Baptist remained unresolved, and because his long thin cross was to be painted only in the final phase, over the top layer of the finished landscape, it is indicated solely by two short strokes in the underdrawing [fig. 46].
In comparison with Raphael’s other panel paintings of a similar scale, the underdrawing of the *Esterházy Madonna* is unusually less elaborated. As Raphael always prepared his works with meticulous care, developing the compositions through whole sequences of drawings, there is no reason to suppose that he outlined the invention of the *Esterházy Madonna* on the panel itself. The very few changes (*pentimenti*) also imply that the painter might have followed a pre-existing compositional study or a finished *modello*. The small-scale *Esterházy Madonna* is one of the very few paintings by Raphael that may be regarded as entirely autograph, from the first stages of its preparation until the final phase of its execution. For this reason, a carefully detailed compositional study and a less-elaborated freehand underdrawing were sufficient for the painter to be able to realize the small group of figures in the still sophisticated composition of the *Esterházy Madonna*.

Once he commenced on the actual painting, Raphael usually did not considerably alter his compositions. He was most likely to modify the background, as is also true of the *Ester-
Various pigments required different modes of preparation and techniques, which basically determined the elaboration of a painting. Some pigments had to be thinly painted in a single translucent layer, while others dictated a multilayered technique, and there were also some that needed underpaint of an equivalent colour. The technique of Raphael’s pre-Roman paintings originates from the mid-fifteenth century Central Italian tradition followed also in Umbria and Tuscany, and closely mirrors that of Perugino and Fra Bartolommeo (1472–1517).22

Paintings were worked up gradually and evenly, and Raphael applied colour in several layers rather than by mixing. He usually covered the larger and substantial passages, such as the sky, with a single, elastically applied layer of oils. Conversely, he elaborated the draperies with a more thickly painted multilayered technique, modelling them with a final layer of glazing with added powdered glass to enhance brilliance. For the most expensive ultramarine, he applied azurite, or azurite and white undercoat, to attain a deeper, more intense effect. Flesh paints were applied in several thin layers of glazing and impasto.23 In raking light the different levels of the painted layers create a sort of low-relief, preventing the possibilities of later modifications. Underdrawing marked the border lines for priming layers, and therefore was usually limited to basic contours and completely disregarded modelling.24

The underdrawing of the Esterházy Madonna, also composed of the main outlines, is detectible even to the naked eye under the most transparent, glazed layers, especially...
50
Fig. 41 in ultraviolet-induced luminescence

51
X-ray image of fig. 41
the Virgin’s face and hands, or the bodies of the two children. As the painting was abandoned at an unfinished stage, each colour had been left in a similar state of incompleteness, therefore the application of flesh paint may be easily examined. Raphael started to work on the thinly applied _imprimatura_ over the ground. On this lead-tin yellow layer of oil-paint he indicated shadows with a pale greenish-brown paint with hatching strokes painted with a stiff brush. As he added a small amount of yellow pigment to the paint, the undercoat received a greenish-golden tone. The use of this prime layer recalls the traditional medieval method of underpainting with _terra verde_ and modelling with _verdaccio_, while its variant mixed with yellow pigments was widely used in Florentine workshops of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. 

Onto this undercoat Raphael applied thick layers of off-white highlights and pulled an opaque layer of pinkish paint over the semi-translucent under-modelling for the hands and faces; this _impasto_ is clearly visible in ultraviolet-induced luminescence imaging [fig. 50]. Finally, for the modelling of the draperies and flesh, Raphael customarily used a thin translucent topmost layer. The _Esterházy Madonna_ remained unfinished: the thin final brownish-grey layer of glaze that would have reinforced the darker shadows was never applied.

The completion of the _Esterházy Madonna_ was presumably prevented by the painter’s sudden departure for Rome, the exact date of which is unknown. The last document referring to Raphael’s sojourn in Florence is a letter of 21 April, 1508, in which the painter asked his uncle to obtain on his behalf a letter of recommendation from Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, for a commission of the painting of ‘a certain room’ (una certa stanza). As the recommendation was to be addressed to Piero Soderini, _gonfaloniere_ of Florence, it has been suggested that the ‘certain room’ may have been the Sala del Gran Consiglio, the decoration of which had been suspended. However, no other source refers to the Sala Grande as a _stanza_, and the room alluded to in Raphael’s letter may rather be one of the suite in the Vatican papal apartments, the redecoration of which had been initiated by Julius II (1503–1513) in November 1507. For
an ambitious young painter yet unknown in Rome, Soderini counted as a patron just as prominent as the Pope’s nephew, the Duke of Urbino.\textsuperscript{31}

Raphael did indeed receive the Vatican commission: a payment dated 13 January, 1509 evidences that he had been engaged in the decoration of a papal room, most probably the Stanza della Segnatura.\textsuperscript{32} In his aforementioned letter to his uncle in April 1508, Raphael mentioned a painting for which he would soon finish the cartoon; the painting is customarily identified with his only major large Florentine altarpiece, the \textit{Madonna del Baldacchino}, intended for the Dei chapel in the church of Santo Spirito.\textsuperscript{33} Although the altarpiece remained unfinished, its stage of completion suggests several months’ worth of work. The first campaign of labour on the ceiling frescoes of the Stanza della Segnatura, commenced by Sodoma (1477–1549) before Raphael’s involvement, is probably docu-

The \textit{Madonna del Baldacchino} was abandoned in an unfinished state in Florence,\textsuperscript{36} but the small \textit{Esterházy Madonna} could have been taken with Raphael to Rome. If the panel was not painted on commission, there was no haste for its completion.\textsuperscript{37} In the complete absence of sources, its origins are unknown. A note once attached to the back of the panel, but today lost, stated that the painting was presented to Empress Elizabeth Christine (1691–1750) by Pope Clement XI (1700–1721).\textsuperscript{38} Although the note is known only from a nineteenth-century transcription, its original place is still clearly apparent in ultraviolet reflective imaging, and its authenticity is approved by the imperial

\textbf{52} Ultraviolet-reflected image of the back of fig. 44

\textbf{53} Roman Master

\textbf{Crouching Venus}

2nd century AD
Marble
Height: 1.12 m
London, British Museum (on loan from Her Majesty the Queen), GR 1963.10-29.1

\textbf{54} Marcantonio Raimondi

\textbf{Crouching Venus}

c. 1509
Engraving printed in red
222 × 148 mm
Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, 5610
wax stamps indicating its Habsburg origin [fig. 52]. Without the existence of relevant sources, the circumstances and time of the painting’s acquisition by the Pope remain among the unsolved questions.

The appearance of the Nerva Forum and the campanile of the San Basilio Church in the background of the Esterházy Madonna raise the possibility that Raphael may have continued working on the unfinished panel after he arrived in Rome. The antique motif in itself does not prove his presence in Rome, but it does demonstrate the complex relation of Raphael’s art with the Antique. In common with his Florentine figure studies, in Raphael’s later works it is also difficult to determine whether the painter studied the included antique motifs in situ or whether they had been mediated to him.

Although we cannot exclude the possibility that Raphael had visited Rome before 1508, the antique ruins of the Esterházy Madonna may be compared with an illustration of the Codex Escurialensis, a collection of copies
after Roman antiquities, originating from late fifteenth-century Florence, and associated with the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448/49–1494).48

The question is further complicated by the fact that the source of the Ponte Quattro Carpi in the background of The Massacre of the Innocents [fig. 25] has also been associated with a drawing in the Codex Escurialensis.44 As the volume had been taken to La Calahorra in Spain in 1509, it could definitely not have served as a direct model for the engraving created in Rome around 1511–12.45

Raphael might have either copied drawings from the Codex earlier, while in Florence, or possibly used pattern sheets in circulation in Florentine and Roman workshops. Whether or not the motif of the Nerva Forum originates directly from the Codex Escurialensis is impossible to decide. However, it calls our attention to the significance of the pattern sheets’ mediating role in Raphael’s art, which is also well exemplified by the twisted posture of the Virgin in the Esterházy Madonna.

The Virgin’s pose was clearly inspired by the Crouching Venus, an antique marble extremely popular in the Renaissance. As a Roman copy of the Hellenistic statue of the Doidalsas type had been in the possession of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, until 1502, this was probably accessible for Raphael [fig. 53].46 However, the Virgin’s pose was not directly borrowed from the original statue, but from one of Leonardo’s studies for Leda drawn between 1504–8.47 In contrast to Marcantonio Raimondi’s engraving depicting the statue from the traditional side-view [fig. 54],48 Leonardo’s drawings present the statue from a frontal view, emphasizing the ideal sinuous form [fig. 55]. Raphael adopted Leonardo’s interpretation of the antique statue, and adjusted with creative independence the classical motif of the Crouching Venus to the Christian theme of the Esterházy Madonna.49
3 For Raphael’s Florentine patrons, see Alessandro Cecchi in Florence 1986, pp. 37–46.
4 For Raphael’s Florentine Madonnas, see Meyer zur Capellen 2001, pp. 145–207.
5 Clark and Pedretti 1968, no. 12276.
6 Joannides 1983, no. 169 cf. no. 165f; for the drawing in detail, see Sylvia Ferino-Pagden in Vatican 1984–85, no. 44.
7 Raphael’s drawing indicates an intended proportion of 2:3 while that of the final panel is 3:4. The posterior cutting of the lower and upper edges of the panel, along the incised lines marking the borders of the image, means that its proportions were not significantly altered, see Móré 1987, p. 107.
9 For these methods, see chapter 3, note 64 and 65.
15 Mozo 2012–13, p. 325.
17 This is suggested by the drawing’s pricked vertical axis falling somewhat to the left, which corresponds with the painting’s central axis.
18 Like most of Raphael’s paintings of this period, the Esterházy Madonna was painted on a poplar panel. The panel subsequently underwent an extreme reduction of thickness, which is greatly responsible for its heavily warped condition; see Móré 1987, pp. 107–9. The small, randomly scattered white dots visible in the X-ray image are surface bubbles caused by the stirring or overheating during the preparation of the gesso; cf. Roy, Spring, and Plazzotta 2004, p. 5. The very pale tone of the X-ray image suggests an imprimatura consisting of lead-white, see fig. 51.
19 The character of the lines is similar to those in the underdrawing of Raphael’s contemporary Madonna of the Pinks and Aldobrandini Madonna (both in London, National Gallery) executed two years later. Although the EDX-examinations performed on these two paintings detected lead and zinc, this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that Raphael used silverpoint in the underdrawing of the Esterházy Madonna, see Roy, Spring, and Plazzotta 2004, p. 26 and Carol Plazzotta in Bomford 2002, p. 130.
20 This is particularly evident in comparison with the infrared reflectographs of the Madonna of the Pinks of c. 1506–7 and the Garvagh Madonna of c. 1509–10, both with full freehand underdrawing (London, National Gallery), see Roy, Spring, and Plazzotta 2004, pp. 26–31, fig. 6; Dunkerton and Penny 1993, fig. 5, see also Hiller von Gaertringen 1999, pp. 244–55.
21 The infrared reflectograph of the Madonna del Baldacchino shows that in the last preparatory phase before painting, Raphael applied brown lavish to alter some details of the underdrawing, as well as to model forms, see Mozo 2012–13, pp. 324 and 326–28. For a detailed analysis of the altarpiece’s technique, see Florence 1991, pp. 55–64 and 79–82.
22 For detailed technical analysis of Raphael’s early paintings, see Shearman and Hall 1990; Penny 1992; Dunkerton and Penny 1993; Roy, Spring, and Plazzotta 2004; Roy and Spring 2007. The National Gallery, London has published numerous technical documents, see http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/raphael-research-project. Our information on the Esterházy Madonna derives primarily from the documentation of its restoration and technical examination performed by Miklós Móré in 1984; published partially in Móré 1987. Another essential source of information was the unpublished presentation by András Fáy.
25 Sonnenburg 1990, pp. 71–72. The method is also clearly visible in Raphael’s Canigiani Holy Family (Munich, Alte Pinakothek) and in the unfinished Madonna del Baldacchino.
26 Bomford 2002, p. 29; Dunkerton and Roy 1996.
27 Such a topmost layer was applied also on the Mond Crucifixion and the Saint Catherine (both
28 Shearman 2003, pp. 112–18.
29 Caglioti 2000, p. 337.
30 Nesselrath 2004a, p. 282.
33 For the different views, see Shearman 2003, p. 115; for the altarpiece, see Meyer zur Capellen 2001, no. 40.
35 Shearman 1977, p. 140, note 5.
36 In the Lives, Vasari mentions two unfinished paintings by Raphael, the Madonna del Baldacchino and the Colonna Madonna (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie), and suggests the latter was completed by Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, see Vasari (ed. Milanesi), vol. 4, pp. 328–29.
37 For the supposition that the Esterházy Madonna may be identical with one of the Madonna paintings that Raphael executed for Giudobaldo da Montefeltro mentioned by Vasari in ed. Milanesi, vol. 4, pp. 322–23, see Ferino-Pagden and Zancan 1989, p. 78.
38 For the provenance of the Esterházy Madonna, see Garas 1983.
39 Térey 1916, p. 111.
40 It has been suggested that the painting was probably in the possession of Cardinal Domenico Passionei in Rome in October 1702 (Garas 1999, pp. 109–10). 'Monsignor Passionei hat einen Entwurf (bozzetto) desselben Sujets, der so groß ist wie ein halbes Folioformat, aber ganz anders. Die Madonna kniet und der heilige Johannes kniet, aber auf der anderen Seite, so daß keinerlei Ähnlichkeit besteht. Monsignor Passionei has a sketch (bozzetto) of the same subject, which is as large as a half folio, but quite different. The Madonna is kneeling and Saint John is kneeling, but on the other side, so no kind of similarity exists.' (Epé 1990, p. 165).
42 See chapter 2, note 45.
45 Shoemaker 1981, no. 21 and Emison 1984, p. 262.
46 Bober and Rubinstein 1986, no. 18.
47 For the antique sources of Leonardo’s Leda, see Allison 1974; for the drawings, see Bambach 2003, nos. 88, 98 and 99; for Leonardo’s relation with antiquity, see Dalli Regoli, Nanni, and Natali 2001; Marani 2003–4; Nanni and Monaco 2007.
48 Bartsch XIV.235.313; Marzia Faietti in Bologna 1988, no. 36; for the dating of the print and its sources, see Laura Aldovini in Athens 2003–4, no. XI.25.
49 For Renaissance depictions of the Crouching Venus and its connections with the Esterházy Madonna, see Holo 1978–79, esp. pp. 31–32.
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