The Artful Hermit. Cardinal Odoardo Farnese's religious patronage and the spiritual meaning of landscape around 1600

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INTRODUCTION: THEORIES OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

The development of the genre and the question of its meaning

In his essay 'On Landscape Painting', published in 1832 in *Über Kunst und Altertum*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) conjectured that in time the landscape in the background gradually took over the main part of the religious painting's surface and pushed the figures to the margin. The landscape thus took precedence over the figures set in it, and became an autonomous genre in art. With this hypothesis, Goethe placed religious history-painting and the genre of landscape at opposite ends of the same scale:

While with the progression of art they [the painters] began to look around in the open air, [believing that] something important and worthy should accompany the figures, for which high viewpoints were chosen, castles piled on top of each other on high cliffs, and deep valleys, forests and waterfalls were depicted. Henceforth, the surroundings gained ever more the upper hand, squeezed the figures into the small and narrow, until they shrivelled into that which we call *staffage*. However, these landscape panels should contain, like the preceding religious images, something interesting, and for that reason they were filled not only with that which could be found in one particular region, but they wanted at the same time to offer an entire world, so that the viewer had something to look at, and the amateur received enough value for his money. ... In order that a record of the original purpose of the painting remained: one would spot in a corner some holy hermit, Jerome with the lion, Magdalene with the hairy costume rarely lacked.¹

Although Goethe did not clarify exactly in which period and place he situated this phenomenon of the rise of landscape-painting, he was probably thinking of the period of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when both in Italy and in Northern Europe painted landscape acquired a new importance for painters and their patrons. When the hermits Goethe alluded to are reckoned with, the Catholic context relates particularly well to the Italian situation, where the rise

¹ Goethe 1961, pp.563-564: 'Wie man aber bei weiterem Fortrücken der Kunst sich in freier Natur umsah, sollte doch immer auch Bedeutendes und Würdiges den Figuren zur Seite stehen, deshalb denn auch hohe Augpunkte gewählt, auf starren Felsen vielfach übereinandergetürmte Schlösser, tiefe Täler, Wälder und Wasserfälle dargestellt wurden. Diese Umgebungen nahmen in der Folge immer mehr überhand, drängten die Figuren ins Engere und Kleinere, bis sie zuletzt in dasjenige, was wir Staffage nennen, zusammenzuschrumpfen. Diese landschaftlichen Fakten aber sollten, wie vorher die Heiligenbilder, auch durchaus interessant sein, und man übertielt sie deshalb nicht allein mit dem, was eine Gegend liefern konnte, sondern man wollte zueinander eine ganze Welt bringen damit der Beschauer etwas zu sehen hätte und der Liebhaber für sein Geld doch auch Wert genug erhielt ... Damit aber zuletzt noch eine Erinnerung an die erste Bestimmung der Tafel übrig bliebe, bemerkte man in einer Ecke irgendeinen heiligen Einsiedler. Hieronymus mit dem Löwen, Magdalene mit dem Haargewande fehlten selten.'
of landscape as an autonomous subject in art came about around 1600.²

Goethe's theory was based on three important assumptions. Firstly, that art followed a gradual-linear technical development, which made it possible to trace the origins of the art of the present to that of the past. With this concentration on formal progression, any innovation in iconography or its significance was negated. Indeed, painted landscape presented the reverse movement: its rise was, according to Goethe's theory, related to the disappearance of narrative content, resulting in a concentration on the purely visual and formal aspects of art. This also implied, by analogy, that the figure of the saint or hermit gradually became meaningless as well, a mere remnant of its origin in history-painting.³

Secondly, Goethe assumed significant changes occurring to the status of the artist, labelling him as lone genius, acting independently from any possible buyer, who would pay for the product only when it contained enough diversion to the eye. It was the artist who chose to depict the meaningless elements of nature, and filled it in with some *staffage.*⁴ The figures should, however, be small enough not to obstruct the image of nature's variety that the artist tried to capture.

Thirdly, the above citation presupposed a clear distinction between the foreground of a painting, essentially containing the *subject* of the painting, and the background, which formed the *setting* or foil for the main event. Even in the genre of landscape-painting this strict hierarchy between the two compositional elements prevailed; but because of the reversal of roles between 'subject' and 'setting', this finally resulted in a complete negation of the iconographic significance of both compositional elements. Only the genius of the painter could now lend a work of art its meaning; *staffage* was not a constituting element in that sense.⁵ According to Goethe, the hermit in an early seventeenth-century Italian landscape painting was a mere pretext for the painter to demonstrate his skill at observing and depicting the beauty of nature.

Goethe's remarks could certainly be applied to the work of artists in the early nineteenth century, when the meaning of figures in a natural setting had become subservient to the

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² Ocht 1977 published a modern study of this phenomenon, which assumed that the secularization of the hermit in art took place during the seventeenth century.

³ For the meaning and use of the word 'staffage' in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artistic theory, see Pochat 1977 and especially Strahl-Grosse 1991; see also Hunt 1976, esp pp.1-9 on the presence of hermit-staffage in eighteenth-century gardens and painted landscapes. Karel van Mander was the first author to use an early form of the word, 'stoffacy' in his *Schilder-Boek* of 1604, where it was employed as a characteristic to distinguish between various types of painted landscapes.

⁴ In the *Propugnium 1965,* p.865, Goethe even stated that in contemporary painting, historical and mythological staffage could even disturb or destroy the effect of the landscape itself.
atmosphere and mood that the landscape itself was to convey to the beholder. The painted landscape functioned as a mirror in which the beholder could see his personal feelings reflected. But how relevant was this Romantic perception of the genre to the situation that existed two hundred years earlier? Were Goethe's assumptions regarding the role of the painter in the artistic process, the meaninglessness of the landscape as background, and the marginal significance of the desert-saint also true for the early seventeenth-century beholder? And did landscape-painting become a genre in its own right in the sixteenth century because of its aesthetic and hedonistic appeal?

**Italy and the Netherlands – practice and theory of landscape-painting**

Beginning in the early twentieth century, art-historians have examined in detail selected elements of Goethe's theory, or detailed the importance of his theory for specific geographic contexts. His view of the phenomenon was never completely refuted. This resulted in two schools of research with their own explanations regarding the rise of the genre of landscape painting: that devoted to Netherlandish or northern art, and that devoted to Italian art. Discussion of the origins of the genre of landscape in art-historical studies around the middle of the twentieth century resulted in a distinction being made between north and south in the production and style of painted landscape, which has deeply influenced subsequent interpretations of its possible iconographic meaning.

In his study of 1947 on the development of Netherlandish landscape, Walter Friedländer implied that it had been Northern artists who had laid the foundations of the genre by embarking on the practical side of production and specialization. His discussion of the stylistic development that occurred during the sixteenth century placed a strong emphasis on the technical competence of the artists, and their own motives in wishing to master the realistic depiction of nature. This he deemed possible as a result of the burgeoning phenomenon of the art-market in Northern Europe and especially in the Low Countries: it liberated painters from a patron's prescriptions and allowed them freedom in their choice of subject. As a result of this severe curtailing of the importance of patronage in this area, painted nature mirrored the personal competence as well as the individual preferences of the artist. Landscape as an independent genre in art was, in Friedländer's eyes, a result of this new individualism. Although landscape in Netherlandish visual art was the prime subject of his study, the predominance of the Northern painters over their

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Italian colleagues in this genre would render Friedländer's conclusions also applicable to the latter: he stated that the Flemish painters 'filled a niche in the Italian production', which Italian painters themselves did not master, nor aspire to control. Although he did not state why the art of landscape had such a positive reception in the southern context, he did imply that there was a corresponding, but slightly delayed, change in the Italian art-market.²

Partly in response to Friedländer, in 1953 Ernst Gombrich wrote that a definition of painted landscape as paese was used for the first time in 1521 by Marcantonio Michiel in Venice, when describing a work in the collection belonging to Cardinal Grimani - this was a work by an artist of northern origin: 'Albert of Holland'.¹² Starting from this dichotomy between terminology and reality, Gombrich argued that the theoretical basis for the depiction of nature as a worthy subject for the visual arts had been prepared by the Italians; this he traced to various fifteenth- and sixteenth-century treatises. The threshold to specialisation in practice was first crossed, however, by Flemish and Dutch painters - in this respect, Gombrich agreed with Friedländer.

Notwithstanding his research on the theoretical background of the genre, this material did not provide any direct explanation on the significance of the genre. The only assumption which related it to Goethe's theory and Friedländer's discussion, was that the painted landscape represented a new phenomenon and sign of modernity; in this case not, as Friedländer had supposed, caused by new social conditions, but by an intellectual movement. The main effect of these two studies on subsequent art-history was a consolidation of the idea that landscape-painting was a sign of modernity, and that the northern and southern schools came to be considered as technically related, but fundamentally different in cultural significance and context.¹¹

Friedländer 1947, pp.58-59; this argument was taken up by Gombrich 1953 and by Eberle 1980, pp.74-81, linking it with Renaissance individuality, and referring to Hauser's view of the development of a market for the arts.

² Friedländer 1947, pp.104: 'Um 1600 wurde die Überlegenheit, die Vorbildlichkeit Italiens in der europäischen Kulturwelt anerkannt, soweit 'hohe' Kunst ... angestrebt wurden. Im Landschaftlichen dagegen verhielten sich die Nordländer, namentlich die in Antwerpen geschulten Maler sich nicht nur nehmend, sondern auch gehend dem Süden gegenüber. ... Sie scheinen eine Lücke der italienischen Produktion zu füllen, und die Römer mögen einen Beruf, den sie nicht hoch schätzen, ohne Erforschung den Fremden überlassen haben.'

³ On the basis of recent studies it is possible to maintain that the acceptance of landscape-painting in Italy was related to the development of the art-market; for this latter phenomenon see Reinhardt 1998.

¹² Michiel 1888, p.102: 'molti tavollet de paesi ...'; See Gombrich 1953; see also Alpers 1979, pp.113-114 and especially Mitchell 1995 for a reaction and critical discussion of Gombrich's theory, although neither intended to criticise the idea of the gradual evolution of the setting to main topic, and the related iconographic voidness.

The differences between Italian and Northern culture have been often seen as mutually exclusive; an example is Salerno 1977-1978, vol.1, p.xlv, who wrote: 'Although it is true that the European tradition of landscape painting in the seventeenth century originated in the encounter between Northern and Italian artists, the differences between the two cultures cannot be sufficiently emphasized.' From the side of scholars on Dutch art this has been confirmed by Alpers 1983, pp.xxvii-xx, insisting on the fundamental differences between Italian and Dutch culture. Recently, the rise of landscape in art was attributed to the Calvinist and Lutheran theories of art; see Papenbrock 2001, pp.118-124. On the other hand, Brown in Renaissance Venice and the North - 1999, pp.424-435, suggested that there were
The Italian traditions

In the field of Italian landscape painting, four lines of approach can be discerned in attempts to resolve the question of the rise and meaning of the genre: the humanistic context, *villeggiatura*, the pastoral, and the libertine or atheist movement. Arguments derived from the paintings themselves and written sources were used in all four approaches to sustain the association of the landscape with modernity. All except the last option are interrelated through the background of humanism and the revival of antique culture. Common to all four approaches is the assumption that landscape in art is a sign of a new way of looking at the world, and essentially meaningless in the traditional iconographical sense; landscape can only allude to, not *mean* anything in particular. The beholder could project his own feelings and thoughts upon the landscape, that would reflect these ideas as a mirror. For this reason, the only possible way to explain its significance is a recourse to general cultural phenomena, that are reflected in, but not embodied by the works of art themselves.

Firstly, the rise of painted landscape in the sixteenth century has been related to a new interest in the visible world that came about with the humanistic approach of the Renaissance, and early forms of scientific thinking. According to this theory, Italian artists began to observe and draw as accurately as possible the things they saw. In a further elaboration of this theory on the learned origins of landscape-painting, the development of new fields of science was related to this phenomenon: biology, geography and astronomy all furthered a new and uninhibited gaze upon the sub-lunar world. New philosophical trends sustained this new perception of the world. The result of such a supposed development should be that visible nature was released from its medieval symbolic associations and came to stand for something new and modern.

The second phenomenon that has traditionally been connected to the rise of the landscape-genre was the culture of *villeggiatura* or retreat into the countryside. During the sixteenth century, Italy witnessed a growing popularity of the villa - both in architectural and humanist theory, and the practice of building. The contemporary antiquarian interest which triggered the architectural development of this building-type also led to renewed study of the classical arts that were used to decorate these edifices, including that of painting. The discovery in the Golden House of Nero of ancient frescoes with representations of landscape might have led to imitation by contemporary painters - although it is for lack of evidence hard to prove whether the indeed cross-currents between Northern Europe and Venice at the beginning of the sixteenth century that affected the meaning of landscape-painting.

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12 This concept was described (in 1930) by Praz 1975, pp.283-287.
sixteenth-century artists actually had seen ancient examples of landscape-painting.\(^n\) What they certainly did know were the descriptions of landscape-depictions and their makers by Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius.\(^n\) According to these authors, depictions of nature were particularly apt for buildings that were located in, or near to, the countryside. Pliny suggested that these paintings had a 'pleasing effect' upon the beholder, just like the real landscape, and Vitruvius regarded them as a fitting 'ornament'.\(^n\) But did the contemporary, sixteenth- or seventeenth-century viewer indeed perceive the genre of landscape or even the real countryside as a conscious evocation of a classical past? In the case that this might be answered affirmatively, as has been suggested recently in a study on the Villa Mondragone in Frascati, whether landscape-painting sustained any particular iconography has still not been clarified.\(^n\)

Such landscape all'antica, whether directly inspired by antique examples or not, might be furnished with meaning by the third cultural tradition that worked upon the rise of painted landscape: the pastoral. The revival of classical bucolic poetry in the early sixteenth century in Venice, and then beyond, led to a vogue in plays and texts inspired by the theme of shepherds and peasant-girls.\(^n\) Around 1600 the popularity of this kind of literary text reached its peak with the publication of the Gerusalemme Liberata by Torquato Tasso. The genre of landscape had been connected with this literary tradition from its beginning through theatrical stagings of these plays; and until well into the eighteenth-century pastoral figures often appeared as staffage in landscape-paintings, both in Italy and in Holland.\(^n\) In general it is assumed that the figures lend the landscape its particular flavour; nature essentially functioned as a suitable background for the action of the story and was painted to suit the pastoral mood.\(^n\)

A fourth line of approach developed Goethe's estimation of the essentially void iconographic significance of the painted landscape, and interpreted it as a radical new departure

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\(^n\) Menasse 1989b, Courtright 2000 and Courtright 2003; archaeological studies have made clear that for example Nero's Domus Aurea in Rome, which was discovered in the 1470s, contained mural-decorations with landscapes; see Peters 1982. For the visits of artists to the Domus Aurea in the sixteenth century, see Dacos 1969 and Dacos 1995.

\(^n\) On the influence of these ancient texts on the art of landscape, see Börsch-Supan 1967, p.240-267 and Ling 1977.

\(^n\) Pliny the Elder 1938-1962 vol.9, p.347 (Bk.35,116) and Vitruvius 1962, p.103.

\(^n\) Courtright 2000, p.135-136 argued that the particular staffage in the Vatican Tower of the Winds was inspired upon Vitruvius and Pliny the Younger's descriptions, and thus a clear allusion to landscapes all'antica; Ehrlich 2002 proposed that the rise of villeggiatura and the appreciation of the countryside were the result of a conscious evocation of the classical examples.


\(^n\) Clubb in The Pastoral Landscape 1992, pp.117-120.

\(^n\) Studies on the influence of the pastoral on Dutch painting include McNeil Kettering 1983 and Catritz Gowing Rosand 1988, pp.113-129.

\(^n\) This particular effect of the staffage on the interpretation of the painted landscape is a result of early eighteenth-century artistic theory; see Strahl-Grosse 1991, pp.118-131.
in the arts. Starting from this supposition, some scholars have maintained that the emerging genre was able to represent new messages for members of certain cultural or socially elevated groups. New Italian elites, especially in Roman society, supposedly took up this new and 'unoccupied' genre, and invested it with social criticism and political ideals: in other words, the genre stood for the 'democratising and the existential' aspirations of these social aspirants. In a variation on this approach, the genre of landscape has also been regarded as a vehicle for Libertine, atheist or anti-Catholic movements. Depicting the visible world in pure realistic terms might, according to this theory, be interpreted as a refusal to acknowledge any higher authority, whether this be God, the church, or authority at large. This could even apply to certain painters who, by adopting this potentially progressive subject, expressed their refusal to fulfil the expectations of courtly or ecclesiastical patrons.

The Dutch traditions

The preceding explanations for the rise of painted landscape in Italy have been largely ignored in studies of the Dutch equivalent. Religious and social characteristics of Dutch 'burgher' society in the seventeenth century were considered so radically different from the Italian context of Catholicism and court-culture, that the theories of the latter could not be applied to the former. With regard to Dutch landscape-painting, three modes of thought have been followed primarily: the emblematic-moralistic interpretation, the motif of civic pride, and the neo-aesthetic (or neo-empiric) approach.

The first approach proposed to regard depictions of nature as offering a 'scriptural reading' of elements in the landscape, thus constructing a moral view of human life in this world. A winding road through the countryside would stand for earthly pilgrimage, in which the human being encountered various temptations such as an inn or tavern, or conquered problems symbolised by bridges, before reaching the goal of the Heavenly city. In a less strict interpretation of this approach, the Calvinist religion promoted a vision of the world as a reflection of the Creator. Paintings, just as the real countryside, might then be read by the viewer

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1. Lagerslof 1990 p.2, and passim. This might also be related to the pastoral, as this literary tradition often contained elements of social criticism as well. See for this aspect Krul 1996.
4. For an overview of diverse interpretations see Falkenburg 1989 and Falkenburg 1999.
5. Bruyn in Masters of Seventeenth Century 1987, pp.84-103, Falkenburg 1988 and more recently Walford 1991. For the Italian situation, the term 'Paysage moralisé' was coined by Panofsky; this has, however, mostly been considered in the context of sixteenth-century Venice and not beyond; see Emison 1995 for a critical discussion of this concept and its limited influence.
as a reflection of the Divine, and thus as an allegorical and even devotional image.\footnote{Bergveld 1978, p. 141, Bakker-Leeflang 1993, Van Os 1997, pp 12-14, and most recently Bakker 2004.}

The second approach to Dutch landscape argued for the socio-political context of the newly-established country, liberated from its Spanish oppressor after eighty years of war.\footnote{Chong Schama in Masters of Seventeenth Century... 1987, Levesque 1994 and Levesque 1997. A comparable approach with regard to Rembrandt’s landscapes was taken by Schneider 1990, although the chauvinistic content was considered here only a motivation of secondary importance. Leeflang 1998 threw a slightly different light on the relation between city and surrounding country with respect to the Haarlem painters and the depiction of the Dutch countryside. A discussion of landscape-depictions in the political context of sixteenth-century Holland is Kempers 1996a, esp. pp 84-86.} The conclusion of this struggle would have granted the citizens of this new state a pride of ownership and self-government. In this context, paintings of the Dutch countryside offered burghers a new means of self-definition. A series of prints depicting the landscape around the city of Haarlem would, according to this interpretation, represent national identity reflected in the geographical circumstances in which all Dutch people lived.

Partly in reaction to the above two attempts to discover meanings hidden behind the painted (or printed) surface, a third interpretative approach maintained the concept of art-for-arts' sake, for which the approach taken by Alpers is the most well-known.\footnote{Alpers 1983, esp. pp 119-168. A similar approach with respect to the Flemish tradition, especially Joos de Momper and Rubens was taken by Brown 1996, esp. pp 13-15.} In this view, painters embarked upon the genre of landscape painting as a new way of specialisation, and the anonymous buyer appreciated the technical competencies of the artist and the illusionistic reality of the product.\footnote{Choi and Sehama in Musters of Seventeenth Century...1987.} A predominantly empiric perception as the result of a new world-view was supposed to have steered painters, patrons and collectors towards the acceptance of a new genre that accomplished nothing more than the depiction of the visible in a highly skilled way that seemed to be a mirror of the physical world. On the basis of this, an aesthetic appreciation will have formed itself. With this interpretation, echoes of Goethe and Friedländer recurred in modern art-history.

Cultural exchange and the migration of meaning?

The traditions of research on Italian and Dutch seventeenth-century landscape produced fundamentally different theories on account of the particular cultural circumstances in which production and consumption of painted landscapes took place. The ideas listed above are of a general nature and often contradictory: taken together, they suggest that the more or less contemporary rise of the genre in both countries was the result of several unrelated causes. The struggle for autonomy in Holland was not related in any sense to the traditional political and
economic perception of the Italian *campagna*: the argument regarding a new public might be applicable to both the north and the south, but in the Dutch context this particular group represented the mainstream in society, in the Italian context it constituted a small, new elite.  

The landscape *all'antica* which inspired the Italian painters probably did not have a direct influence on Dutch and Flemish painters, as the northern-style landscape probably had been initiated before the discovery of the Domus Aurea and comparable antique objects. The style of these Dutch and Flemish landscapes can hardly be described as *all'antica*. Finally, the religious background of north and south - Calvinist and Catholic - have been considered fundamentally incompatible in an age that has been described as the cultivation of the opposition between Reformation and Counter-Reformation; although recently, the suggestion has been made that at least before the final break in 1521, the religious significance of particular landscapes was acknowledged by both the Dutch and Venetian public. What that implied for the period around 1600, in different political and religious circumstances, remains the question that needs to be examined. The scriptural interpretation of the painted landscape in Holland was argued on the basis of the dominant Protestant culture: the religious context in Italy surely was completely different, and with it the interpretation of the Scripture. In other words, neither the arguments nor the results of the two traditions of interpretation offer analogies that might explain the migration of the genre and the acceptance of the Flemish specialisation in an Italian context.

But the cultural exchange between north and south, and the rather open society of early modern Europe with respect to learning and the arts, necessarily should constitute part of any explanation for the rise of painted landscape around 1600. From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, trade in paintings brought Flemish landscapes to Italian buyers. Many Dutch and Flemish artists travelled to Italy, where they contributed to the development of the genre of painted landscape. The city of Rome, where a lively exchange between Northern and Italian painters occurred in the late sixteenth century, is one of the most pre-eminent examples of such a cultural melting pot, where the different conceptions of the painted landscape merged into the

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1. This realism in Dutch painting has recently been re-interpreted as a signifier of its own; see for example Weststeijn 2001.
2. On the political iconography of landscape in early modern Europe, see Warnke 1992; on the use of landscape to construct a political identity, see Ehrlich 2002. Another political and economic explanation for the use of landscape has been given for the rise of the genre in Venice: the conquest of the *terraferma* in the fifteenth century would be one of the causes for the important role of landscape-backgrounds in Giovanni Bellini's oeuvre; see Goffen 1975. For a political and juridical interpretation of the painted landscape in fourteenth-century Siena, see Kemmers 1989.
3. Brown in *Renaissance Venice and the North* 1999, p.425 suggested that the Venetian public in the early sixteenth century was able to understand the religious significance of paintings such as those by Patinir.
This also touches upon the matter of artistic patronage: in most theories it is assumed that the painter chose to specialise in the genre, while the buyer remained an anonymous customer without particular demands.\textsuperscript{16} This shift towards the art-market was not gradual and did not occur evenly in all places. Especially with regard to the situation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, and more particularly in Rome, the open market was much less evolved than elsewhere. However, this did not obstruct the acceptance of painted landscape as separate genre. On the contrary, between 1570 and 1620 an ever increasing interest in depictions of the visual world abounded among the more important artistic patrons such as members of the Papal court and noble families. These patrons sought out artists to produce panels and canvases with landscapes: and they chose painters of both Northern and Italian origin. That modern theories presuppose different ways of reading these two distinct stylistic traditions, needs to be reconciled with what the contemporary Roman beholder perceived when he looked at works by such diverse artists as Pieter Brueghel, Paul Bril, Adam Elsheimer, Carlo Saraceni, Annibale Carracci or Lanfranco.

The subject of this book, the Palazzetto Farnese in Rome, contained painted landscapes by all these painters. In that sense, it was unprecedented in Rome. In the modern art-historical literature, the Palazzetto has even been called one of the decisive moments in the development of the genre.\textsuperscript{17} Its owner, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (1573-1626, fig. 1), had a very marked preference for depictions of nature in art: he was one of the major collectors of landscape-paintings in his time. He acquired works directly from painters such as Elsheimer, Bril and Saraceni, or else bought their works on the emerging art-market.\textsuperscript{18} Farnese also played a crucial role in the development of the genre, as he had summoned the painter Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) to come to Rome in 1593.\textsuperscript{19} Carracci became an important figure in the development of landscape painting both in person and through his pupils, such as Domenichino, Lanfranco and Albani.\textsuperscript{20} Within the Carracci Academy in Bologna, drawing landscape had been a standard part of an artist’s training. The presence of many of these painters in early seventeenth-century Rome

\textsuperscript{17} Salerno 1977-1978 vol. 1, pp.xxix-xxxii did pay attention to the question of patronage and collecting with regard to landscape-painting in Rome, however with a predominant influence attributed to questions of stylistic taste, not related to meaning and iconography. Lagerlof 1990 and McIngle 1996 paid attention to this aspect, but only regard to very particular groups.
\textsuperscript{19} On the market of art in Rome, see Reinhardt 1998, pp 81-92.
\textsuperscript{20} Zapperi 1986.
had a marked influence on the course of the arts, especially in the genre of landscape. Thus, Odoardo Farnese can indirectly be held responsible for an important evolution in the history of Roman painting: the acceptance of the genre of landscape among Italian artists, through his hiring of Annibale Carracci and his pupils.

The Farnese collection of landscapes was allocated in a separate part of the Palazzo Farnese, the so-called Palazzetto Farnese (fig. 2), at the latest around 1603-1604. It demonstrates strange discontinuities challenging the difference ascertained between Italian and Northern landscapes as assumed in earlier art-historical studies. Both Flemish and Italian paintings, from diverse schools, hung next to each other in the same room. The criterion of style – however that might be defined – obviously did not count much for Farnese. Also the supposed incompatibility of secular versus religious interpretations of the genre is challenged by the disposition of themes in the Palazzetto. Mythological themes were used in the major part of the decoration, while the hermit-theme dominated the landscapes of one particularly intriguing room, called the Camerino degli Eremi. Although the exact function of this room has been the subject of discussion, it seems to have been a kind of private chapel with a view into the adjacent church of Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte (fig. 3).

The patron, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese obviously saw no objection in combining these seemingly diverse themes and styles of landscape painting in one building. Staffage and style were not entirely consistent; only the landscape furnished some kind of coherence. For this reason, none of the general theories of landscape discussed above can be exclusively applied to this object, as none offers an explanation valid for both secular and religious contexts, and which can include both the work of northern, and of Italian painters. It seems that details overlooked in the theories discussed above need to be reconciled with the particulars of the Roman context around 1600. Does the Palazzetto fit into the theories proposed with regard to the genre of landscape in that particular time and place?

**Painted landscape in Rome between 1570 and 1620**

In the decades around 1600, the genre of landscape received much attention from patrons and collectors of art in Rome. Many interiors of palaces were embellished with landscape-imagery

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12 Whitfield 1988, pp.73-95 and Bjurström 2002.
either in oil or in fresco. Gregory XIIIBoncompagni (1572-1585) had the newly built projects of the Tower of the Winds and the Gallery of Maps illustrated with both geographical maps and painted landscapes. Sixtus V Peretti (1585-1590) had the Lateran Palace decorated with landscapes. The apartments of Paul V Borghese (1605-1621) in the Vatican and Quirinal palaces contained friezes with landscapes along the upper part of the walls.

Many owners of private palaces followed suit: there is hardly one programme of late sixteenth-century decoration in which depictions of nature did not occur. This phenomenon lasted throughout the seventeenth century, with examples by Domenichino (1581-1641) and Lanfranco (1580-1647) in the Casino Ludovisi. Agostino Tassi (1578-1644) in Palazzo Lancelotti. Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi (1605-1650) in Palazzo Mutti-Papazzurri and the Villa Doria-Pamphilj. Herman van Swanvelt (ca.1600-1655) in the Palazzo Pamphili and Gaspar Dughet (1615-1675) in Palazzo Colonna. In many villas in the vicinity of Rome, the application of painted nature was equally common - one need only think of the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, the Villa Lante at Bagnaia and the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati - and in the form of panels or canvasses, painted landscape was present in almost every Roman collection. Major holdings of paesi, as these works were usually called in seventeenth-century inventories, were collected around 1600 not only by Farnese, but also by cardinals such as Scipione Borghese (1576-1633) and Federico Borromeo (1564-1631). Later in the century, Palazzo Doria-Pamphilj and Palazzo Colonna contained major holdings of landscape-paintings, both of Northern and of Italian artists. Around the middle of the century, a particular preference for the genre was displayed in the collection gathered by Camillo Massimi. Landscape-decoration in Rome was a general phenomenon in tune with the European tendencies, sustained by a large group of patrons, and produced by a heterogeneous group of painters. The distinction usually made on the productive

15 For the Tower of the Winds in the Vatican, decorated by the Bril brothers, see the recent publications by Courtright 2003 and Hendriks-Negro 2003.
16 For the Lateran Palace, see Mandel 1994; for the Gregorian projects see Börsch-Supan 1967, pp.266-267, and for the Pauline apartment in the Vatican see Fumagalli 1996. See also Chapter 1, pp.56-57.
18 For palazzo Lancelotti see Cavazzini 1998; for Grimaldi see Ariuli Matteucci 2002, for Swanvelt in palazzo Pamphilj see Russell 1997; for palazzo Colonna see Boisclair 1986, pp.61-63 (where it is erroneously identified with the romitorio - for which see Chapter 7), Safark 1999, pp.98-102, and Strunk 2000.
side between the two traditions seem not very adequate to solve the problem of its rise as an autonomous genre.

But the Roman situation around 1600 manifested its own peculiarities. Around 1600, there was a vogue of applying painted landscapes to the walls of churches and chapels. San Vitale, Santo Stefano Rotondo, and the narthex and a chapel in Santa Cecilia in Trastevere contained friezes or larger scenes with hermits in natural settings; a side-chapel in the Gesù dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi contained conspicuous landscapes by Paul Bril (1553/54-1626). All of these decorations were executed before 1600. In the sacristy of the Sistine chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, landscapes by Bril decorated the lunettes. Between 1587 and 1589, Bril also executed a number of frescoes in the Scalo Santa in which the landscape played an important part. Probably some two or three decades later, the nave of Sant'Eustachio in Rome was decorated with a series of paintings on canvas (now lost) by Agostino Tassi representing the story of Saint Eustace, within conspicuous natural settings. A grand conclusion to this development of church-landscapes can still be admired in San Martino ai Monti, where between 1647-1651 Grimaldi and Dughet turned the walls of the aisles into illusionistic views of the countryside.

Within private chapels the preference for landscapes was equally conspicuous: for example, between 1605 and 1613 the chapel in Palazzo Aldobrandini in Rome was embellished with oil-paintings by Annibale Carracci and his pupils. In these works episodes from the life of the Virgin were primarily presented in natural settings, of which the most famous is the Flight to Egypt by Annibale himself. In the early 1620s, the walls of the small chapel in Villa Sacchetti at Castel Fusano were covered with landscape-frescoes by Pietro da Cortona (1597-1669), containing episodes from the Bible and, characteristically, hermit-saints.

It seems logical to turn to this kind of religious object to discover whether and why the use of painted landscape within ecclesiastic settings was considered appropriate, offering a test-

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51 For Massimi's collection, which contained both much northern landscapes and works by Lorrain, Poussin and Dughet, see Beaver 2003.
case for the supposed Christian meaning of the genre which was suggested mainly with regard to Northern landscapes and Calvinist culture. Indeed, the suggestion to take this approach was already made in 1890 by Woermann in an article on the phenomenon of landscape-painting in liturgical contexts, which he labelled *Kirchenlandschaften* - ‘church-landscapes.’ Woermann was the first scholar to note the presence and importance of this phenomenon in early Baroque Rome. Although he restricted himself to stylistic analysis and refrained from tackling its possible meanings (he called this ‘a task for art-philosophers’), he did suspect the existence of an underlying religious significance. Until now, however, the coherent group of paintings examined by Woermann has not been subjected to further research which could point out the coherence in concept and meaning of these landscapes within their liturgical settings.

It can be assumed that a well-defined and coherent culture lies behind this particular phenomenon of landscape as church-decoration. Firstly, the circles of patrons and painters were quite limited, and they all had some tie or another to ecclesiastical institutions. Even many of the secular Roman patrons and collectors had connections to the ecclesiastical authorities and adopted trends originating within the papal court. The same can be assumed on the part of the artists, who were largely dependent upon papal or ecclesiastical commissions. Painters favoured by religious commissioners were also often sought after in secular circles, thus securing the transmission not only of literary and learned ideas, but also of artistic and visual concepts.

Secondly, the *Kirchenlandschaften* represented a vogue which had a very limited time-span: with one exception, all the church-cycles were painted between 1570 and 1620. In the later seventeenth century, no such predilection for this kind of decoration existed with respect to Roman churches and their patrons, while the significant advent of the same subject in the private realm only took place after 1600. This makes the phenomenon of *Kirchenlandschaften* all the more intriguing: the use of the genre in churches preceded its application in private or secular contexts.

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2. The only religious interpretation given to Italian landscape-paintings had been interpreted as a critique of current Catholic culture; Salerno 1977-1978 vol. 1, pp. xlv-xlvii; others have followed this, such as McFige 1996 and especially Lagerlöf 1990.
3. Woermann 1890.
5. The first reaction to Woermann was in Schrade 1931, p. 3, who stated that the landscapes were secular in intention, and only justified by the presence of the religious staffage: ‘Jedessalb ist es der als Staffage dienende Gegenstand der die Anbringung von Landschaften in den kirchlichen Räumen rechtfertigt.’ Od 1971, pp. 74-76 newly pointed out the importance of this phenomenon in relation to anchoretic iconography. Braun 1987, p. 185; n. 61 noted an analogous phenomenon of landscape paintings in seventeenth-century Flanders, which thus far has not been thoroughly explained, nor has it been considered in relation to the Roman situation.
palaces. Did this also imply that possible meanings of the former type influenced the interpretation of the latter? But before anything can be said about a possible migration of meaning, it should be understood what kind of message the genre conveyed when the Roman beholder would encounter these landscape-decorations in liturgical or religious contexts.

**The meaning of Kirchenlandschaften**

Until now, studies on Roman ecclesiastical monuments containing landscape-decorations show as little consensus as the more generic discussions on landscape considered above. Even regarding this limited phenomenon several contrasting interpretations have been proposed: they range from an evaluation of landscape as a meaningless background, appealing to the secular interests of the patron, to an assessment of the landscape as an aid in devotional practice. In these explanations, the elements of the more general theories of landscape were used as the basis for arguments. Thus, the problem of the various contrasting general theories of Dutch and Italian landscape-painting also applies to studies on the Roman field, but they are often further limited by an excessive concentration on the peculiarities of each commission. These discussions of objects show little regard for the larger cultural and historical context which, as one would expect, ought to provide a framework for linking these objects to each other.

The earliest monument of importance for the development of the painted landscape in Rome, the chapel of Fra Mariano in San Silvestro al Quirinale decorated by Polidoro da Caravaggio around 1526, has received two contrasting interpretations. Gnann considered the landscapes frescoed on the lateral walls as background-additions to the hagiographic stories and an artistically driven evocation of the ancient style.⁶⁴ In contrast, arguing from the point of view of the commissioner of this decorative cycle, Stollhann's conclusion was that the natural setting appealed to the patrons' love for nature and his openness to the new tendencies of Italian art. Especially in the latter theory, the introduction of the landscape in a liturgical setting was interpreted as an innovation in taste and style.⁶⁵

Studies of the decoration of the churches of San Vitale and Santo Stefano Rotondo - both executed in the late sixteenth century - concentrated on the Jesuit context to which both objects belonged. Scenes of torture, filling the landscapes in both churches, have been the subject of hypotheses on the relation between episode and background. It has been suggested that the natural setting toned down the brutality of the martyr-scenes, implying that the landscapes

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⁶⁴ Gnann 1991; Warbinksy 1987 did not discuss the iconographical meaning of Polidoro's paintings.
themselves carried no meaning in support of the figures' religious intentions; they were coined as 'pastoral' in mood, softening the impact of the gruesome iconography.  

Another explanation offered for both cycles of murals focused on the sense of place in the *Spiritual Exercises* by Saint Ignatius, the founder of the Order. In his system of meditation, in order to come closer to the narrative, and obtain a better empathy with its protagonists, the practitioner should imagine in his mind the place where a biblical event or religious story occurred. This method of mentally projecting the scene of the action was called *compositio loci*. An illustrated book was published almost contemporaneously with the fresco-cycles: the *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* of 1593. These plates used the same notational system with letters in the image and captions underneath, as can be found under the frescoes in the two churches. Many of the outdoor events of the Passion, illustrated and commented upon in this book, were set within landscapes. Analogous to this, the landscapes painted on the walls in the churches of San Vitale and Santo Stefano Rotondo have been regarded as providing the viewer with an image of the setting of the tortures, to help their devotional practice.

A third interpretation regards the landscapes in Santo Stefano as referring to places and regions of the Roman Empire where these martyrdoms were carried out, or, alternatively, as evocations of ancient examples. The latter theory considers this antique evocation as an answer to the Tridentine call of truthfulness and realism in painting. The frescoes thus enhanced the historical feeling of these early-Christian martyr-scenes. Matteo da Siena, to whom the frescoes in the Santo Stefano Rotondo have been attributed, has even been regarded as the person responsible for recreating of the landscape-style *all'antica*. Ultimately, this can of course also be linked to the *compositio loci*, as it provided the beholder with information on the appearance

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1 Haskel 1971, p.67; this was followed by Abramson 1981, p.243 and Zucchi 1984, p.142. The first scholar to suggest this was Male 1932, p.114: 'Le Guaspre les a fait presque disparaître au milieu des beautes de la nature ...'. See also Mansour 2004 (forthcoming) with respect to the representation of the human body.


3 Monsen 1983, pp.52-54; for Nadal's *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, see Monsen 1983, pp.73-77, Spengler 1996, Fabre 1992, and Melion 1999. On the other hand, Monsen 1989b, p.261 stated that the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *compositio loci* were of primary importance to painting in Roman churches around 1600, but with regard to its meditational function, not affecting the composition itself.

4 On account of a series of prints after the decoration in Santo Stefano Rotondo, the same argument that the decoration performed by means of the *compositio loci* has been defended in Noreen 1998.

5 Monsen 1983, pp.50, 58 and 50.

6 Buser 1976, p.432: 'Finally, the landscape setings of the frescoes in S. Stefano Rotondo may well have been intended to lend them an antique feeling. At this time, a boat the only precedent for the extensive use of landscape was the frequent landscape decoration in ancient Roman wall painting. If such settings could convey an antique flavor in the sixteenth century, then there is no longer an anomaly ... to the obscure placement of martyrdoms amid frescoed forests at S. Vitale, a novitiate chapel belonging to the Jesuits.'

7 Monsen 1989b, especially p.256: 'Therefore the most likely explanation to our problem [landscape-painting in Rome: AW] is the growing taste for landscape painting in general at the end of the sixteenth century. Thus the choice of subject in certain cases may have been determined by taste rather than by a concern for didactic function.'
of the landscape in which the saint's lives and deaths had occurred.

The painted landscapes in Santa Cecilia, Sant'Eustachio and the sacristy of the Sistine chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore have not yet received thorough iconographic attention. In Santa Cecilia the presence of the hermits in each scene might offer an explanation for the presence of the landscapes, but not for their significance: in Santa Maria Maggiore the lunettes in the sacristy have been connected to the predilections of the patron, Sixtus V Peretti; and the panel-paintings in Sant'Eustachio present a difficult case, as the archival material is lost as are the works themselves. Here, the logic of the natural setting might be linked to the main character of the series, Eustace, and the traditional iconography of this saint.73

A problematic range of interpretations is presented by the landscapes frescoed by Gaspar Dughet in San Martino ai Monti. Although this cycle of large-scale paintings falls outside the strict period of Kirchenlandschaften, its form and location at least trigger a comparison with the cycles executed between 1570 and 1620; it was considered by Woermann to be the culmination of the phenomenon as he described it. Several conflicting reasons have been proposed for the decision to decorate the aisles of this church between 1645 and 1651 with landscapes. On account of Dughet's biography, which attests to his wanderings in the Roman campagna, Mâle suggested that the landscapes portrayed the vicinities of Rome and Tivoli where the painter had spent so much time drawing and studying.74 In this case, artistic autonomy is taken as the determinant factor.

Another explanation for the landscapes in San Martino is rather prosaic: Dughet was supposed to have received the commission as landscapes were cheaper than historical scenes. The patron, prior Giovan Antonio Filippini of the adjacent Carmelite monastery, paid for the new decoration out of his own pocket, and thus had to be keen on the financial aspect.75 The publication of the accounts, however, has proven this assumption to be wrong - Dughet was even given an extra financial reward, as the prior was very satisfied with the final result.76 According to yet another interpretation, these decorations were supposed to have been first and foremost evocations of the quietude of a natural setting outside the city, a haven of peace and quiet. It was not nature itself, but the mood it evoked that helped the Carmelite monks to attain the right kind

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73 Malé 1932. pp.447-448: 'Parfois on croirait voir les rudes sentiers de la Sabine, bordés d'arbres majestueux et de chênes antiques brisés par la foudre; parfois, des villes lointains se suspendent aux collines, et l'on distingue à l'horizon la ligne de la mer, l'imense plaine où laboure Hésée a la nudité grandiose de la campagne romaine.'

74 Mâle 1932. pp.447-448: 'Parfois on croirait voir les rudes sentiers de la Sabine, bordés d'arbres majestueux et de chênes antiques brisés par la foudre; parfois, des villes lointains se suspendent aux collines, et l'on distingue à l'horizon la ligne de la mer, l'imense plaine où laboure Hésée a la nudité grandiose de la campagne romaine.'

75 Sutherland 1964. pp.115-120.
of devotional concentration, and thus again, albeit in a different way, painted nature sustained but did not actually contain a message.\footnote{Bandes 1976, p.59: 'Moreover Dughet's use of landscape in his frescoes emphasizes the eremitical beginnings and ideals of the Order. By his masterly blending of subdued tones of brown, green, blue and pink, Dughet created harmonious and idyllic settings for his figures. The mood set by these landscapes is one of rural serenity and quietude. San Martino was transformed into a tranquil refuge for the inhabitant of the city, where the noise and crimes of the inhabitant of the city remain outside its doors.'} It was, however, at the same time implied that at first sight, they 'were to draw the viewer in', only revealing on a second inspection their religious content.\footnote{Metraux 1979, p.125: 'By contrast, the landscapes on the side walls at San Martino are viewed by the modern visitor - and by the seventeenth-century worshipper too - as landscapes first, only later and after contemplation, explanation or study, as religious scenes... The means and ends of the iconographical program are modified: the landscape settings are emphasized to draw the worshipper in, to give a satisfying decorative effect without sacrificing a powerful religious message.'} Their beauty was thus supposed to capture the attention of the spectator.

Another proposal with respect to the meaning of these murals was to connect them with the biblical account of the life of Elijah, the main subject of the scenes in these landscape-settings. The language in the Old Testament would have evoked in the painter the will to adorn the scenes with the kind of barren and impressive nature in which the episodes evolved.\footnote{Weermann 1890, p.355: 'Aber die gewählten Vorgänge aus dem Leben des Propheten Elias sind schon in der Erzählung der Bibel vom landschaftlichen Haupte umweht: sie forderten daher selbst zur landschaftlichen} In this last case, a universal phenomenon is used to explain the occurrence of a particular form in a particular place and time, while the former discussions reverted to either the painter or the patron. This kind of fragmented line of argumentation has not helped clarify the situation but rather it has obstructed a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Kirchenlandschaften.

The case of Odoardo Farnese and the decoration of the Palazzetto thus questions most of the issues of the modern discussions on the rise and meaning of the genre of landscape around 1600, both in general and with regard to the Roman context. The combination of styles and staffage in its decorative programme constitute, according to modern preception, a range of seemingly incompatible combinations. A case-study on this object thus ideally lends itself to probe the various general theories of the theme of landscape-painting: whatever solutions the different theories offer, they should be applicable to all elements of the paintings commissioned by Farnese for this particular place. In the eyes of the patron, the various parts of its embellishment amounted to a coherent whole, into which all elements should fit, including the Camerino degli Eremiti.

Should then the addition of the Camerino to the Palazzetto be thought of as an instance of contrasting subjects - based on the change in staffage - or should the decoration rather be seen as establishing continuity by the strict application of painted landscape? To what extent do the
elements of landscape and hermits relate to the setting and function of the Palazzetto? In other words, which aspect of these paintings counted the most for Farnese? What does the change in staffage, from secular to religious tell us about his personal tastes? Did he turn from being a hedonistic man, who commissioned Annibale Carracci in 1595 to paint the blatantly secular Farnese Gallery, into a serious and devout person towards the end of his life?98

Still other general issues are invoked by Farnese's patronage of landscape-painting in the Palazzetto: the relation between setting and staffage, and the general perception of these two compositional elements by the Roman public. After all, it should be presumed that Farnese's iconographic intentions were in some way congruent with the general meanings of hermits and their landscape-settings, whether in painting or maybe even in reality. What was the relation between anchorites and the sight of nature in the eyes of the early seventeenth-century beholder, and what general cultural and historical phenomena did these two parts in artistic compositions refer to?

**An alternative approach: ecclesiastical policy and patronage**

While general studies on the meaning of painted landscape tended to ignore particulars of the individual work of art, detailed research on the iconography of particular objects in Rome often selectively discussed four important characteristics, without paying attention to the ways in which these were related. These are the Roman ecclesiastical culture in the last half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, the significance of the patron in this particular context, the spatial setting and context of the landscape-genre, and the relation between setting and staffage. These interrelated aspects ought to be studied in conjunction, so as to avoid arriving at incompatible, separate conclusions. Research can build upon prior studies in the first three fields that have offered insights in various aspects that touch upon the painted landscape. It will be the aim of this case study on the Palazzetto and Camerino, to show how these elements can be combined to offer a new solution to the question what the theme of painted landscape conveyed to the early Seicento beholder. Only then can the impact of the fourth, the relation between staffage and landscape, on the development of the genre be properly understood.

First, ecclesiastical policies regarding images in Rome after 1570 were determined by

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discussions started at the Council of Trent, resulting in the twenty-fifth Tridentine Decree proclaimed in 1563. This contained very general recommendations about religious art. In the twenty-fifth and last session, it was declared that meaningless images should not be painted in churches:

Let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.\(^8\)

In addition to this prohibition on purely decorative, and thus secular art in the liturgical context, the creation of new themes or forms of iconography for the decoration of churches was not encouraged, as the uninstructed viewer could become confused by unfamiliar symbols and their meanings. The introduction of radical changes or novelties was discouraged, unless the bishop responsible had given prior approval:

And that these things may be the more faithfully observed, the holy Synod ordains, that no one be allowed to place, or cause to be placed, any unusual image, in any place, or church, howsoever exempted, except that image have been approved of by the bishop.\(^8\)

Determining in what way these decrees impeded the use of landscape as decoration in churches is a complex matter: many studies have been dedicated to the question of whether these decrees had any influence on the arts at all, and, if so, to what extent they influenced the decoration of churches.\(^8\) Yet, at the moment when the innovative decoration of religious buildings ought to have triggered a negative reaction, especially if these landscape-depictions were indeed regarded as imitations of antique painting, or mere evocations of *villeggiatura*, this did not take place.\(^8\)

This suggests that in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities landscape did carry significance that was in tune with the function of churches and chapels. This is not unexpected, as most of the

the necessity of the Farnese-family to have a representative at the Papal court. The ecclesiastical role he played in early seventeenth century Rome, which is the main topic of this book, was not considered in depth thus far.

\(^8\) *Canons and decrees of the Tridentine Council*, cited from the translation by Waterworth 1848, p.236.

\(^8\) Waterworth 1848, p.236.

\(^8\) For a survey of the debate over the interpretation of the Tridentine Council and its influence on culture around 1600, see O'Malley 2000. Weisbach in 1921 and Pevsner in 1925 started the discussion on the relation between Counter-reformation, Mannerism, and Baroque. The two most authoritative studies to date on the relation between Trent and the visual arts are Prodi 1962 and Jedin 1963. More detailed studies deepened this debate and clarified a number of points, most importantly that of the regional interpretations of the Council’s decrees; see for example Bosshhio 1974, Kummer 1993 and Krich-Hupaflauf 1995. Scrivazi 1992 and Hecht 1997 published theoretical studies on theological literature on the arts after the Tridentine Council.

\(^8\) A most compelling example is the debate over profane themes in liturgical spaces, concentrated on the so-called *grottesche*. These antique motifs had become in vogue after the discovery of antique frescoes and stucco-reliefs in the buried rooms of the Golden House of Nero in the years after 1480, and were widely applied in churches, which phenomenon had become a thorn in the eyes of reformers after the Tridentine Council. Theological treatises published after 1563 strongly condemned this practice precisely because these *grottesche* were considered meaningless and antique. See Hecht 1997, pp.316-327 on this debate and its consequences.
patrons belonged to the ranks of officials of the Catholic Church, and were thus well aware of the current conventions with respect to religious art.

Second, research on patronage should for this reason be taken beyond the triangle of commissioner, artist and the artistic product. Classical studies on this paradigm, such as have been published on Alessandro Farnese and on Odoardo himself, do not offer a useful methodology to explain the emergence of the painted landscape, or the question of its possible meanings. Too many arguments, such as individual preferences and taste are anachronistic and subjective, and thus hardly helpful in this context. Pure aesthetic preferences, as have been assumed as motif behind Renaissance patronage and the taste for art, do not help understanding, as they negate both any significance for the genre of landscape and ignore functional intentions for the works of art themselves.85 Also a view on patronage as purely a means of self-promotion truncates the discussion unnecessarily. That Odoardo, as has been presumed, favoured mythological subjects in paintings as he preferred to live a secular life, and exchange his cardinal's hat for the Ducal crown of Parma or even the Crown of England, is difficult to maintain, and isolates Farnese from the larger Roman context in which he lived and worked.86

However, Odoardo was not only a member of a ducal family, but also member of the papal Curia. This fact introduced a dialectical situation in earlier historiography: some studies of Farnese's patronage stressed his secular adherence, whereas others have solely considered him in the latter role of illustrious prelate. The result of these two approaches is a debate whether Odoardo became devout at the end of his life, or had been interested in religious matters from the start. To overcome this paradox and the unanswerable question on the evolution of Odoardo's mental state, the institutional context should be included in a research on his artistic commissions. Such an approach might be termed 'public patronage' as Francis Haskell coined it: a form of patronage that did not serve the private interests of the individual patron, but a public goal.87 An example of such a disinterested patron was Louis XIV of France: one of the great patrons of artists, but one who was not interested in the visual arts on a personal level.88 Studies on the artistic patronage of cardinals in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century have touched upon this aspect, without however taking implications of institutional and public

87 Haskell 2001.
88 Burke 1991.
contexts to a firm conclusion. It will be sustained here, that the patronage displayed by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century cardinals should be regarded in strict conjunction with the aims of the Catholic Church and Christianity.

As a result, a broader sociological view on patronage, such as has recently been applied in studies on Italy and Rome during the early modern period, might offer more useful insights. This will mean a shift in emphasis in what is meant by patronage. Recent historical studies argued that the social structure of upper classes in early modern Rome was characterised by intertwined family- and political structures. Confirmation of this particular view on the Roman situation around 1600 can be found in a recent project which aims to uncover the matrix of ecclesiastical functions and obligations of cardinals during the papacy of Paul V Borghese. Preliminary results of this project have indicated that the ecclesiastical positions occupied by members of the higher classes were never merely intended as sources of income, but as proper political obligations. Thus, the definition of patronage as used in historical sociological research should be applied: patronage is a long-term relationship between patron and client, in which the patron provides brokerage, mediation, favours, and access to networks of friends. These theoretical approaches imply that Cardinal Odoardo should not be considered a mere representative of his family, nor as being completely independent from the Curia, but as actor in a complex network of relations based on clientelism.

In addition, it should be questioned who were involved in such relations of patronage, and what role the arts played in this context. Too often in arthistorical studies, the client is identified with the artist, whereas he actually was only the third party. Nor were his products a mere show of wealth: in this network of patronage, art should not merely be regarded as a sign of conspicuous consumption, as this ignores the questions of subject, meaning and social function.


Kemper 1987 and Hollingsworth 1996, esp. pp.121-142; Hollingsworth however did not draw any conclusions with regard to Odoardo Farnese's religious patronage but still upheld the dialectics between secular and religious projects, and the primary function of artistic patronage as a display of wealth and secular power; see pp.128-129.

Reinhard 1970 proposed the historic-sociologic theory of intertwined political factions and families, which was followed in Nüssdorfer 1992. An analogous approach can be found for the inner circles of the pala Curia can be found in Rietbergen 1983. For a historical study on the complexity of state and society of early modern Rome, see Prodi 1987; a recent collection of essays on Roman elites can be found in Die Kreisen der Neptun 2001, esp. the conclusion and discussion on p.359f., where the social position of prelates of the lower and middle ranks is pointed out.

Faber 1999.

Weissman 1987, pp.25-26 gives a very helpful definition of patronage in five points of which my definition is a compilation.
In many cases, artistic patronage supported social claims and aspirations. Applying the sociological theory of gift-giving to this institutional context allows for a repositioning of the artwork: it played a part in cementing, documenting and maintaining relations. Artists did not operate as clients *per se,* but executed the gifts exchanged between patron and client, or, in other words, gave visual expression to the kind sociological realities described above. Recent studies have argued the primary influence exerted by the patron on the content of the work of art, suggesting a direct link between patronage, iconography and Church policy. Translated to the theme and subject of this study, it should then be asked what motives can be found behind Odoardo's 'public patronage' and 'gift-giving' that can explain his predilection for landscape painting.

Thirdly, the question of spatial context should be addressed in a study on the landscapes in the Palazzetto and Camerino: iconography is not a system of signs conferring meaning irrespective of setting and surroundings, but only reveals its true significance within its proper context. With regard to religious iconography, it has been stated that the precise liturgical requirements are of great importance to the message conveyed by works of art. Also the location of paintings in private palaces, and the degree to which these were visible to the public affected the way they were understood. The Palazzetto and Camerino should for this reason not be considered mere containers in which landscape painting was collected more or less at random, but as a context structuring latent iconographic meanings into particular directions. How did the impression of the landscapes as displayed in the Palazzetto influence and prepare the beholder's perception of Lanfranco's decoration in the Camerino degli Eremiti?

This is especially important as the combination of landscapes with (solitary) saints found in most of the *Kirchenlandschaften* was frequently encountered in private palaces. The migration of this particular theme from the liturgical to the secular realm, and from fresco to panel-painting, offers an interesting test-case for the assumed adaptation of meaning to different expectations.

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4 See for example Annibaldi 1988 and Strunck 2001 and Karsten 2003 on the function of the arts as a means of social distinction, beyond the mere aspect of conspicuous consumption. See Burke 1987, pp.132-149 and Burke 1993, esp. pp.155-157 for the applicability of the concept of conspicuous consumption to the situation in early modern Italy; an important study in this field is Goldthwaite 1993. Goldthwaite 1987, p.153 stated: 'One way to get a broader perspective on the patronage of art, therefore, is to regard it as a form of consumption.' However interesting the results of this kind of research may be, it does not inform on the works of art in question or the way they were perceived by contemporary beholders.

5 Kettering 1988, p.131: 'Gift-giving was a euphemism for patronage; the material assistance and protection of a patron.' See also Kettering 2002, chapters I-IV.

6 Not only works of art, also the artists themselves could be involved as 'gifts': Odoardo Farnese 'lent' Annibale Carracci to other prominent in Rome as a kind of political favour; see Zappieri 2003.

While in the former context the saintly staette probably represented religious concepts, this is not immediately clear when this subject is found in a private dwelling. The circumstances in Rome – where both patrons and artists operated in the religious as well as the secular realms – do suggest that there were reciprocal influences between the two areas. But did the religious hermit continue to carry comparable meanings in the secular context? Crucial in this approach is the functional question: the use of a particular space predetermined the expectations of the beholder, and thus the way works of art were interpreted.

Setting and iconography touch upon the fourth and last aspect to be included in the methodology of this study: the relation between landscape and staette. If the figures in the landscape constituted the signifying element for the meaning of the whole composition, then the migration of the subgenre of anchorite landscapes from one context to another would not affect their iconography. In that case, the Palazzetto and the Camerino constituted two diverse interpretations of the theme of landscape, and unrelated by any kind decorative programme. If, on the other hand, staette was a mere excuse for the use of landscape, the paintings in both Palazzetto and Camerino should be regarded as parts of a coherent programme, in which the anchorites either were void details, or invested with a new significance. Then, also the phenomenon of Kirchenlandschaften might be deemed an instance of introducing secular imagery in a religious setting after all, which would corroborate Goethe’s theory of landscape-painting, and, by consequence, turn religious iconography in certain Seicento Roman churches into a problematic category.

A combined study on the patronage of Odoardo Farnese, the decoration of the Palazzetto and the iconography of Lanfranco’s Camerino along the lines set out above will provide new answers to old questions. Were the small figures in the corner of painted landscapes mere marginal reminders of their predecessors in history-painting, as Goethe stated, or did they play an integral role in the message that these works of art were to convey? What were the meanings attached to the respective elements of landscape and the anchorite? And what did Roman patrons aim to convey in particular to their intended public, when they asked for this particular iconography of landscapes and hermits either in churches or in rooms and halls of their own palaces?

The discussion of the Palazzetto Farnese including the Camerino degli Eremiti undertaken here will start with a detailed study on the decoration, its architectural context, patronage and

*Sinding-Larsen 1984*
intended use along the lines of art-historical theory. A discussion of predecessors of the Camerino and some contemporary comparable objects will allow placing the room and its embellishment into several traditions. They will at the same time clarify the originality of its concept. Subsequently, attention will shift from the object to the ideas it represented. The focus will progress beyond iconography and typology to the question of thematic and meaning. By understanding all these seemingly diverse facts - the immediate and physical context of architecture and painterly decoration, the systems of institutional patronage into which this fits, to the general religious, ecclesiastic and cultural circumstances - it will be possible to understand the relations between the detail and the general of painted landscape in this particular time and place, and between subject and theme.

The risk that these respective views will result in an equal number of explanations is avoided here by retaining Odoardo Farnese and his institutional patronage as the nodal point for each of these approaches. His choices in subject, theme, location, context and function, regarded in the socio-historical context of early modern Rome, are the guiding principle. Farnese will stand as representative of his class, in the double sense of 'Cardinal born a Prince', as he was called in a manual on the life on the cardinal. Within that context, significant details will indicate in what respects he deviated from the normal patterns of artistic and institutional patronage in early Baroque Rome. It will be shown, that his preferences for art, including the way he had the Palazzetto embellished with landscapes, were intimately related to all these particulars.

Researching the Camerino degli Eremiti with the eyes of both an art-historian and that of a cultural and ecclesiastical historian will help to bridge the gap between generic and specific theories of landscape, and throw a new light on the relation between an art-historical case and its plural cultural contexts. In this sense, the Camerino degli Eremiti will not be discussed as a unique example, but as one that sheds light on general trends in artistic and religious culture. By extension, the exemplarity of culture and the arts of seventeenth-century Rome for the rest of Europe, and the high status of Farnese as nobleman, cardinal and patron of the arts will qualify the application of the conclusions to be drawn from the Palazzetto and Camerino to the discussion of landscape-painting in early modern Italy in general.

\[\text{Albergati 1598, p.47: 'Cardinale nato Principe'}\]