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THE NATIONAL GALLERY
WOMEN AND THE ARTS FORUM
THE ANNUAL ANNA JAMESON LECTURE

Third Lecture
18 April

2023

ABOUT THIS LECTURE SERIES

The National Gallery Anna Jameson Lecture series, established in 2021, takes place annually and invites a guest speaker to give a lecture focused on women in the arts, past and present. The lecture series and related publication series are supported by Professor Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. The Anna Jameson Lectures form part of the lively research and events programme associated with the National Gallery’s Women and the Arts Forum, also supported by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, in honour of her mother, Stacia Apostolos. The lecture series is named in recognition of Anna Jameson (née Murphy, 1794–1860), who is often identified as the first English female art historian. An early scholar of Italian Renaissance art, she was also the author of the first systematic study of Christian iconography in English.

SPEAKER’S BIOGRAPHY

Professor Babette Bohn is an internationally renowned specialist on Bolognese art, with significant publications in the field including *Ludovico Carracci and the Art of Drawing* (Harvey Miller, 2004) and *Le “Stanze” di Guido Reni: disegni del maestro e della scuola* (exhibition catalogue, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, 2008). In relation to the topic of this lecture, she has also published important texts on Early Modern Italian women artists. Her groundbreaking monograph, *Women Artists, Their Patrons, and Their Publics in Early Modern Bologna* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021) received the prestigious PROSE Award in the category of Art History and Criticism, awarded by the Association of American Publishers in 2022. Labelled ‘a monumental contribution to a rapidly growing body of studies on pioneering women artists’ (Sheila Barker, Founding Director, Jane Fortune Research Program on Women Artists), the book

explores why women artists were far more numerous, diverse and successful in Early Modern Bologna than elsewhere in Italy. Investigating 68 women artists, including Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665) and Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), she considers women artists as painters, sculptors, printmakers and embroiderers, and shows how Bolognese women artists expanded beyond the portrait subjects that women were usually confined to. Around the same time, Professor Bohn contributed to Eve Straussman-Pflanzer and Oliver Tostmann’s exhibition catalogue, *By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800* (Yale University Press, 2021), published to accompany an exhibition of the same name at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Hartford, Connecticut, 2021–2022). Since then, she has written a number of scholarly essays on Italian women artists, including one for the exhibition, *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400–1800* to be held at the Baltimore Museum of Art, followed by the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto between 2023 and 2024. Professor Bohn has held teaching positions at the University of California (Santa Cruz), Sonoma State University (Rohnert Park, California) and Texas Christian University (Forth Worth, Texas), where she was Professor of Art History from 2001 to 2021.



Portrait by Glen E. Ellman, 2023

SYNOPSIS OF THE LECTURE

Until 2018, when the National Gallery acquired Artemisia Gentileschi’s (1593–after 1654) *Self-Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, the collection included only two pictures ascribed to an Italian woman: Rosalba Carriera’s (1673–1757) *Portrait of a Man*, and a portrait of Carriera now considered a copy after the same artist, both of which were acquired in a bequest in 1916. From this starting point, Professor Babette Bohn was asked to share her important research on museums in the largely English-speaking world and their comparative histories of collecting Italian women artists who lived before 1800.

Focusing mainly on the UK, Ireland and the USA, Professor Bohn’s lecture considers some of the factors explaining why museums and galleries in these countries took so long to build their collections of Italian women artists, despite the admiration for such artists expressed by earlier writers such as Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616–1693) and Anna Jameson (1794–1860). Comprehensively investigating an area of research that has never been undertaken before, her goal was to assess the evolving interest in Italian women’s art as seen in the development of museum collections that were mostly founded after the Early Modern period. Whether acquired as gifts, bequests or purchases, the lecture considers key questions related to collecting works of art by Italian women:

what factors made such works desirable additions to museums; how have those variables changed over time; and what might the future hold? Bohn traces the early acquisitions that mostly began with works on paper, considering which museums developed a particular interest in paintings, drawings and other works by Italian women and, whenever possible, what factors contributed to the interest in such works. Bohn also provides spreadsheets that track every pertinent acquisition to date in these three countries, thereby substantiating the very different acquisition records traceable in each.

Professor Bohn’s lecture offers a critical insight into our growing understanding of Italian women artists of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Her research sheds light on the importance of Western institutions responsible for collecting, protecting and exhibiting them. Furthermore, the extensive data she has accumulated as part of this research, attached to this lecture essay in the tables and spreadsheets, will provide an invaluable resource for other researchers investigating this topic for years to come.

Edited by Susanna Avery-Quash and Jonathan King
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THE LECTURE

Many thanks to Director Gabriele Finaldi for his generous welcome and to Susanna Avery-Quash for her warm and thoughtful introduction. Dr Avery-Quash organised this lecture (and essay) and has been an invaluable collaborator in every possible way, as have her colleagues Maria Alambritis, Mary McMahon, Michele Maiolani and Jon King.¹ Finally, my sincere thanks to Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, who generously endowed this lectureship to benefit one of the greatest museums in the world.

I’ve given considerable thought to the topic of my presentation, as the first Jameson lecturer who specialises on women artists in Early Modern Italy – rather than on Anna Jameson herself. For anyone who would like to know more about Jameson, I refer you to the lectures and publications of my two esteemed predecessors, Adele Ernstrom and Hilary Fraser, and to the fine publications of Avery-Quash.²

This lecture will examine the history of acquisitions of artworks by Italian women artists who lived before 1800, specifically in the museums of the largely English-speaking countries of the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and Ireland. A comprehensive investigation of this subject has never been undertaken, although studies suggest that both in museums and on the art market, works by women are acquired much less often than works by men.³ Although I have endeavoured to provide comprehensive coverage of those three countries (see Spreadsheets 1–4 for a detailed accounting of each acquisition), my study does not include three other countries that are also largely English-speaking: namely, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The reason for this omission is simple: I found relatively few works by Italian women there. I know of only one in New Zealand, a handsome portrait by Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614) that was purchased by the

Auckland Art Gallery in 1956. In Australia, I found three works by Italian women: in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, a drawing by Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665) and a painting by Fontana that were received through bequests in 1923 and 2021 respectively; and a painting by Barbara Longhi (1552–1638) that was purchased by the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide in 2022. Canada owns six artworks by Italian women; all but one (a painting by Fede Galizia that was donated to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 2015) were purchases. These include an etching by Sirani bought in 2018 by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s Gallery, Kingston; a pastel by Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757) and a painting by Longhi bought by the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto in 1995 and 2021 respectively; and a drawing by Sirani and a pastel by Carriera, purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa in 1956 and 1980 respectively.⁴ Since I suspect that there may be additional artworks in these countries that I have not uncovered, I will leave a full assessment of those collections to another scholar. My only passing comment about these works is that it is interesting and unusual that so many were purchased rather than donated, as this study will demonstrate.

My goal in this lecture is to assess the evolving interest in Italian women’s art, as seen in the development of museum collections that, with a few exceptions such as the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, were mostly founded after the Early Modern period – and why often such interest has strengthened significantly only in recent years. In other words, what factors made – or failed to make – artworks by Italian women desirable additions to museums; how have those variables changed over time; and what might the future hold? I will distinguish between donations or bequests and purchases because the latter often reflect a commitment to incorporating an artist’s work into a collection in a more permanent way.



Fig. 1 **Artemisia Gentileschi** (1593–after 1654), *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, about 1615–17, oil on canvas, 71.4 x 69 cm, National Gallery, London, NG6671 (© National Gallery, London)

And since I am investigating reception history, I have considered every type of attribution, including works that are only tentatively ascribed, works that were acquired before they were credited to women artists and works that were once attributed to a woman artist but are no longer assigned to that artist. A listing of each acquisition is provided in the four spreadsheets that appear at the end of this lecture, and four tables (see Tables 2–5) break down the types of acquisitions that occurred in each of the three countries.

From its founding in 1824, the National Gallery of London quickly established itself as a centre for extraordinary Italian paintings. But until 2018, when it purchased Artemisia Gentileschi’s (1593–after 1654) magnificent *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (fig. 1), the collection included only two pictures ascribed to an Italian woman: both attributed to Rosalba Carriera and acquired in a bequest of 1916 (see figs. 6 and 7 below). And it’s not just Italian women who were long overlooked: the Gallery currently owns only 25 works by women in a collection of about 2400 paintings.⁵ This disproportionately small representation of works by

women artists is not at all unusual. It is typical, in fact, of most museums in the countries I explored. But why? Why, despite the strong admiration of many early writers for numerous women artists, were museums slow to acquire their works? If there is a contradiction here, it is also found in the works of some writers on art, including Anna Jameson (1794–1860), the prolific nineteenth-century author and art critic who coined the phrase in my title – ‘women of undoubted genius’ with reference to women artists – and yet sometimes expressed disarmingly critical views about those very artists.⁶

EARLY WRITERS, WOMEN ARTISTS, AND BOLOGNA

Women artists were celebrated in Italy beginning with Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), who in 1550, in the first edition of his *Lives of the Artists*, profiled the Bolognese sculptor Properzia de’ Rossi (about 1490/91–about 1530), a rarity not only as a woman artist but even more remarkably, as a woman sculptor, an exception to the alleged ‘rule’ that sculptors were always men. This distinction evidently qualified her to become the sole woman to rate inclusion amongst the 142 artists treated in the first edition of Vasari’s biographical compendium.⁷ Properzia’s native city of Bologna became a centre for women artists from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century.

As I revealed in my recent book,⁸ Bologna’s women artists during this period numbered a remarkable 68 – including painters, sculptors, printmakers, embroiderers and creators of drawings – a number that far surpassed every other Italian city. Table 1 compares five major Italian cities during the seventeenth century, showing how Bologna outstripped the others in both the raw numbers of women artists and in their proportional presence in relationship to each city’s population.

One pivotal factor in promoting the success of Bologna’s women artists was the attitude of local writers on art, who beginning particularly with

Table 1:
Demographics of Women Artists in
Five Seventeenth-Century Italian Cities

City	Median Population (approx.)	Number of Recorded Women Artists	Women Artists Per 1,000 Inhabitants
Naples	350,000	8	0.02
Venice	145,000	29	0.20
Rome	100,000	24	0.24
Florence	69,000	23	0.33
Bologna	58,000	44	0.76

Count Carlo Cesare Malvasia (1616–1693) in 1678, saw Bologna’s accomplished women as one of the city’s chief claims to exceptionality in the visual arts. Malvasia’s biographies of the painters Lavinia Fontana and Elisabetta Sirani pioneered a new type of artistic biography for women. Instead of focusing on the life and personal qualities of his female subjects, as Vasari and his immediate successors had done, Malvasia emphasised their artworks, praising their artistic accomplishments.⁹ This unprecedented approach had two consequences. First, it expanded our knowledge of both women’s artistic production, facilitating identifications of their paintings and hence resulting in a larger identifiable corpus of pictures than can be claimed for any of their female contemporaries. And secondly, it constituted the first substantive claim for taking women seriously as art professionals in Italy, equating their gifts with those of their most talented male compatriots. For Sirani, Malvasia asserts: ‘She worked not only beyond any woman, but also beyond any man [...]’.¹⁰ He compared her paintings favourably with those of Guido Reni (1575–1642), whom he saw as the greatest Bolognese painter.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Sirani’s and Fontana’s works were widely collected in Bologna and beyond, accounting for their many identifiable paintings today in such Italian museums as the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, which still owns some of Cardinal Leopoldo de’ Medici’s (1617–1675) many purchases. Leopoldo commissioned the *Allegory of*

Justice, Prudence, and Charity (now the Municipality of Vignola, signed and dated 1664) from Sirani, who also painted the *Cupid Triumphant* (private collection, 1661) for another member of the Medici family. But unlike some works still in the Uffizi, these two were dispersed.¹¹

The Bolognese record suggests that it was not the absence of gifted and celebrated women artists that accounts for their slippage into obscurity in later centuries. The series of prominent Bolognese writers who extolled women artists continued through the nineteenth century. Gaetano Giordani (1800–1873), the director of what later became the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Bologna and a correspondent of Sir Charles Eastlake (1793–1865), the first director of London’s National Gallery, published accolades to his female compatriots, particularly Sirani. In 1832, he wrote the first book devoted exclusively to Italian women artists,¹² and in 1845, Carolina Bonafede (1811–1888), a Bolognese woman, wrote another that she dedicated to the young women of Bologna.¹³

Hilary Fraser has written compellingly about the proliferation of English-speaking women writers who examined female visual artists during the nineteenth century, a group that includes Anna Jameson.¹⁴ A few of Jameson’s books, such as *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, first published in 1834, discuss works by Italian women artists, making some intriguing points. Most of her publications, however, do not. As Adele Holcomb has explained, Jameson planned to collaborate with her friend Ottilie von Goethe (1796–1872) on a three-volume study of women artists, musicians, dancers, singers and actresses, but it was never written.¹⁵

Let’s turn now to the acquisitions of Italian women’s works by museums in the English-speaking world, a group mostly founded in the nineteenth century or later, to explore how interest in Italian women artists has developed over the past 200-plus years. I focus on the UK, USA and Ireland – the three countries with the largest numbers.

COLLECTING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Initially, I planned to limit this project to paintings, since the National Gallery does not collect works on paper, apart from pastels. But it quickly became clear that this would exclude most early acquisitions, since almost everywhere, the first works by Italian women to enter museum collections were on paper. It seems noteworthy that often, these works on paper by Italian women were acquired at the museum’s inception. The earliest examples in the UK were in the British Museum, where one drawing ascribed to Elisabetta Sirani and three engravings by the sixteenth-century printmaker Diana Scultori (1547–after 1588; see fig. 2) were bequeathed to the collection by Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753) in 1753, when the museum was founded.¹⁶ It was more than half a century before any British museum obtained others: in 1816, 17 engravings by Scultori entered the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge as part of the Founder Richard Fitzwilliam, the 7th Viscount’s (1745–1816) bequest, followed by 11 more purchased in 1824.¹⁷ In the 1830s, the Ashmolean Museum received two Sirani etchings in a bequest, while the British Museum continued acquiring Scultori’s prints. Scultori, the first Italian woman to become a professional engraver, created over 60 prints. Today the British Museum owns the largest



Table 2
Overview of British Museums, Purchases versus Donations:
Artworks by Italian Women Artists Working before 1800
(as of August 1, 2023)

Artwork type	Bought	Donated	Totals
Drawings	7	10	17
Prints	56	88	144
Pastels	1	5	6
Miniatures	0	6	6
Watercolours	0	2	2
Paintings	2	7	9
Totals	66 (36%)	118 (64%)	184

Artwork type	Bought Before 2000	Bought After 2000	Donated Before 2000	Donated After 2000	Totals
Drawings	6	1	10	0	17
Prints	56	0	86	2	144
Pastels	0	1	5	0	6
Miniatures	0	0	5	1	6
Watercolours	0	0	2	0	2
Paintings	1	1	7	0	9
Totals	63 (34%)	3 (2%)	115 (63%)	3 (2%)	184

Percentages are rounded.
Based on data from 17 British museums.
Sketchbooks and books of woodcuts are tabulated here as single items.
For details, see Spreadsheet 1.

Table 3
Noble British Collections, Purchases versus Donations:
Artworks by Italian Women Artists Working before 1800
(as of August 1, 2023)

Artwork type	Bought	Donated	Totals
Drawings	48	0	48
Prints	9	0	9
Pastels	5	2	7
Miniatures	3?	1	4
Paintings	6	2	8
Totals	71 (93%)	5 (7%)	76

Artwork type	Bought Before 2000	Bought After 2000	Donated Before 2000	Donated After 2000	Totals
Drawings	48	0	0	0	48
Prints	9	0	0	0	9
Pastels	5	0	2	0	7
Miniatures	3?	0	1	0	4
Paintings	6	0	2	0	8
Totals	71 (93%)	0	5 (7%)	0	76

Percentages are rounded.
Based on data from 6 collections, including the Royal Collection.
Sometimes, acquisition details are uncertain.
See Spreadsheet 2 for further information.

Fig. 2 Diana Scultori (c. 1535–after 1588), *Horatius Coclès escaping into the river after holding off the enemy*, after Giulio Romano, sixteenth century, engraving, 24.3 x 27 cm, British Museum, London, V.8.21 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



collection of her works in the UK, some 63 impressions. All these early acquisitions on paper were obtained as part of a large group of works. So, they may not reflect an explicit interest in Italian women’s art, but they do confirm that these artists were viewed as part of the canon.

The first painting by an Italian woman bought for a British museum was Elisabetta Sirani’s *The Infant Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness* (fig. 3), bought in Florence in 1831 by the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland and transferred to the new Scottish National Gallery in 1859, when it was founded. Like most of Sirani’s paintings, it is signed and dated. And as with many of her pictures, we have a wash drawing that prepared it; in this instance, it is preserved at Windsor Castle.¹⁸

When I say that the museum was the first to purchase a painting by an Italian woman, I am excluding earlier acquisitions for noble collections, such as the Royal Collection, Chatsworth and Burghley House – all distinctively different from public museums (see Spreadsheet 2 and Table 3). Their acquisitions were typically purchases, some of which can no longer be dated precisely. Artemisia Gentileschi’s stupendous *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, now at Hampton Court (fig. 4), was bought by King Charles I (1600–1649) in the seventeenth century and later recovered for the Crown – as was a still life by Fede Galizia (1578–1630) that is now at Kensington Palace – two pictures that reflect the richness and variety of the royal collection under Charles I. The interest of this great royal collector in these works by Italian women seems notable, as do the subsequent, successful efforts to regain them for the Crown.¹⁹



Fig. 3 **Elisabetta Sirani** (1638–1665), *The Infant Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, signed and dated 1664, oil on canvas, 75.5 x 62 cm, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, NG79 (© National Galleries of Scotland, <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5436>)

Fig. 4 **Artemisia Gentileschi** (1593–after 1654), *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, about 1638–39, oil on canvas, 98.6 x 75.2 cm, signed, Royal Collection, Hampton Court (Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023)



Fig. 5 **Elisabetta Sirani** (1638–1665), *Self-portrait as Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, signed and dated 1658, oil on canvas, 236.5 x 183 cm, Burghley House, Stamford, PIC304 (© The Burghley House Collection)

During the late eighteenth century, the 9th Earl of Exeter bought two large, signed and dated paintings by Italian women for Burghley House: Artemisia Gentileschi’s *Susanna and the Elders* (1622); and Elisabetta Sirani’s *Self-portrait as Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (fig. 5). The *Judith* was painted for Andrea Cattalani, a rich Bolognese banker, who owned seven paintings by Sirani; the picture later entered several Italian collections before the earl purchased it.²⁰

With these exceptions and one or two others, it was not until the early twentieth century that museums in the UK began acquiring paintings by Italian women. Significantly, most of these acquisitions were gifts, not purchases. As Table 2 shows, seven of the nine oil paintings ascribed to Italian women that are now in British museums were donated, in contrast to only two that were purchased. Sometimes museums first acquired miniatures or pastels by the great eighteenth-century Venetian artist Rosalba Carriera.



Fig. 6 **After Rosalba Carriera** (1673–1757), *Rosalba Carriera*, eighteenth century, oil on canvas, 57.6 x 39.4 cm, National Gallery, London, NG3127 (© National Gallery, London)



Fig. 7 **Rosalba Carriera** (1673–1757), *Portrait of a Man*, 1720s, pastel on paper, 57.8 x 47 cm, National Gallery, London, NG3126 (© National Gallery, London)

Two miniatures ascribed to Rosalba had already been gifted in the late nineteenth century to the Wallace Collection and to the V&A, which received another in 1910 (see Spreadsheet 1).

In 1916, in a large bequest of mostly Italian pictures from Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894), a former Trustee,²¹ the National Gallery of London received

its first two pictures attributed to an Italian woman, Rosalba Carriera. The painting illustrated in fig. 6 is now considered an early copy after a late self-portrait pastel of the artist at Windsor Castle that was purchased by King George III (1738–1820) in 1762, another example of the interest in Italian women artists in the Royal Collection.²² The *Portrait of a Man* illustrated in fig. 7 was the earliest autograph pastel by Carriera to enter a public museum in the UK.²³ The delicate, sensual treatment of the sitter shows the artist’s command of the pastel medium, for which she became justly famous throughout Europe. The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool received a pastel soon afterwards, in a bequest of 1925; and others were donated to the V&A beginning in the 1960s (See Spreadsheet 1).

But few paintings by other Italian women were acquired during this period, with the conspicuous exception of a fine portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola



Fig. 8 **Sofonisba Anguissola** (about 1535–1625), *The Artist’s Sister in the Garb of a Nun*, 1551, oil on canvas, 68.5 x 53.3 cm, Southampton City Art Gallery, SOTAG: 1979/14 (© Southampton City Art Gallery)

(about 1535–1625), which the Southampton City Art Gallery purchased in 1936 for only £60, on the advice of Sir Kenneth Clark (1903–1983), then director of the National Gallery (fig. 8).²⁴ This engaging portrayal of a young nun who may be the artist’s sister was once signed and dated 1551, making it one of Anguissola’s earliest known works. Two paintings by Lavinia Fontana entered UK museums in 1948 and 1957. One, given to the nation in lieu of death duties, is now at Petworth House; an unusual *Portrait of a Noblewoman* (datable to about 1590), with the sitter dressed in white, by an artist who typically depicted her aristocratic sitters in more colourful garb. The other was gifted to the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool – but prior to its attribution to Fontana. To my knowledge, these are the only paintings convincingly ascribed to Fontana in museums in the UK today.²⁵

A few museums in the UK obtained works by Italian women during the later twentieth century. The Ashmolean Museum bought a fine drawing of Saint Agatha by Elisabetta Sirani in 1953, adding to its two earlier purchases of drawings by her and establishing it as a key repository of her drawings (fig. 9).²⁶ The V&A received three pastels by Rosalba Carriera in the



Fig. 9 **Elisabetta Sirani** (1638–1665), *St Agatha in Prison*, about 1650–1660, pen and brown ink and wash over black chalk on paper, 27.2 x 20.4 cm, Ashmolean Museum, WA1953.17 (Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford)

1960s and 1970s. A donor bequeathed a watercolour drawing by Giovanna Garzoni (1600–1670) to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1973. Meanwhile, the indefatigable British Museum had continued acquiring works on paper by Italian women regularly from 1856 through 1877 and from 1946 to 1982, including a woodcut by Geronima Parasole (about 1564–1622); engravings by Diana Scultori; and drawings by Giulia Lama (1681–1747; fig. 10) and Elisabetta Sirani (fig. 11). The growing number and diversity of women artists and subjects in these

works on paper in the British Museum is unmatched by any other museum in the UK.

Lama’s sketch of a nude woman is the sole drawing by this Venetian painter whose authorship is confirmed by an early inscription. Thus, it provides a key barometer of her draughtsmanship, an aspect of women’s artistic production that is rarely well represented in extant works, particularly in cases like Lama’s, in which no early writers even mention her drawings. The exception to this pattern is Elisabetta Sirani, the first Italian woman to become famous explicitly for her drawings, which were praised by Malvasia and avidly collected during and after her lifetime. *The Virgin and Child* in the British Museum, a finished preparatory study for a painting of 1664, exemplifies the dynamic handling of wash for which she was particularly admired. Sirani is known today in about 150 identifiable sheets, a record unmatched by any female predecessor or contemporary. With some 26 autograph drawings (in addition to a number of less convincing attributions) by Sirani at Windsor Castle and 14 in other British collections, the UK boasts the largest collection of Sirani’s drawings of any country in the world today.



Fig. 10 **Giulia Lama** (1681–1747), *Nude Woman*, about 1701–1747, drawing in black chalk on blue paper, 20.5 x 18.9 cm, British Museum, London, 1946,0713.99 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

Fig. 11 **Elisabetta Sirani** (1638–1665), *Virgin and Child*, 1664, drawing in brown wash over red chalk on light brown prepared paper, 18.5 x 14.7 cm, British Museum, London, 1946,0713.1413 (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

Do these early acquisitions suggest an explicit interest in works by Italian women artists? The evidence is ambiguous. Works on paper were often acquired in large lots, as is true at Windsor Castle, the British Museum and the V&A, among others. Rosalind McKeever has noted that two of Scultori’s engravings in the V&A were part of a group of prints after Raphael and were more likely obtained for their connection to him than for their authorship by Scultori.²⁷ The many drawings ascribed to Sirani at Windsor were purchased in the 1850s and 1860s for King George III, along with hundreds of other Bolognese drawings, by the King’s Librarian Richard Dalton (about 1715–1791).²⁸ Although there are a few exceptions to this pattern – such as the Ashmolean’s specific purchases of three Sirani drawings between 1939 and 1953 – works on paper by Italian women were usually acquired less deliberately. Indeed, through the end of the twentieth

century, an explicit acquisitions policy is evident only for Rosalba Carriera, whose accomplishments in pastel made her internationally popular. Even for Rosalba, however, it is striking that most of her works acquired through the end of the twentieth century by British museums came from donations or bequests rather than purchases (See Table 2).²⁹

Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, the groundbreaking studies of Linda Nochlin, Ann Sutherland Harris and others revived serious scholarship on women artists.³⁰ Since then, interest and knowledge have grown; more works attributed to Italian women have appeared on the art market and some museums have increased their holdings. The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham purchased its first in 2009: a pastel by Rosalba Carriera, one of many works by European women that this museum has acquired in recent years. And in 2018 London’s National Gallery bought its splendid *Self Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria* by Artemisia Gentileschi (fig. 1), its first purchase of a painting by an Italian woman and a key addition to the Gallery’s rich Italian Baroque collection.³¹ This landmark acquisition of the first early work by Artemisia Gentileschi in a British collection was publicised through its visits to a library, a girl’s school and a women’s prison, among other stops. The technical examination and conservation of the picture by Larry Keith and his colleagues in the conservation, curatorial, scientific and framing departments expanded our understanding of how Artemisia worked, her choice of pigments and artistic decisions about composition and lighting.³² Technical examinations of paintings are frustratingly rare for most Italian women artists, leaving gaps in our understanding of their methods. That situation is, happily, changing in recent years, with the National Gallery’s work on Artemisia; the National Gallery of Ireland’s conservation of a painting by Lavinia Fontana,³³ the Getty’s technical study of another picture by Fontana and a few other examples elsewhere. Such examinations contribute to understanding women’s artistic practices, a benefit of taking women artists seriously enough to invest such resources.

IRELAND

Now let’s turn to the situation in Dublin, and the National Gallery of Ireland’s (NGI) holdings of works by Early Modern Italian women. The NGI owns six pastels by Rosalba Carriera (for example, see fig. 12) and five oil paintings by Italian women – the largest group of pastels and paintings by Italian women in any of the museums that I have investigated. The Countess of Milltown donated the pastels to the museum in 1902; but the five paintings were purchased, all but one (Elisabetta Sirani’s signed and dated *Madonna and Child* of 1661) during the later nineteenth century. This accords with the general acquisition profile for the museum’s paintings, 52 percent of which were bought rather than gifted – in contrast with the National Gallery in London, where only 41 percent of the paintings were acquired through purchase, rather than donations.³⁴

Although the NGI currently owns more paintings by Italian women than other museums, this does not always reflect a deliberate concentration in this area.



Fig. 12 Rosalba Carriera (1673–1757), *Winter*, about 1742–43, pastel on blue paper, 33.9 x 27.3cm, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, NGL.3846 (Photo © National Gallery of Ireland)

Table 4
Irish Museums, Purchases versus Donations:
Artworks by Italian Women Artists Working before 1800
(as of August 1, 2023)

Artwork Type	Bought	Donated	Totals
Pastels	0	6	6
Paintings	5	0	5
Total Numbers	5 (46%)	6 (55%)	11

Artwork Type	Bought Before 2000	Bought After 2000	Donated Before 2000	Donated After 2000	Totals
Pastels	0	0	6	0	6
Paintings	4	1	0	0	5
Total Numbers	4 (36%)	1 (9%)	6 (55%)	0	11

Percentages are rounded.
Based on data from one museum, the National Gallery of Ireland, since I know of no other qualifying artworks in Irish museums.
See Spreadsheet 3 for further details.

Three paintings – now ascribed to Marietta Robusti (*A Cardinal*), Sofonisba Anguissola (*Portrait of Prince Alessandro Farnese (1545–1592), later Duke of Parma and Piacenza*, about 1560) and Lavinia Fontana (*Portrait of a Gentleman in Armour*, from about the late 1590s) – were bought as the works of male artists; their current attributions to Italian women artists were proposed only later.

An exception to this pattern is Fontana’s magnificent *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* (fig. 13), her largest picture and the focal point of a recent, major monographic exhibition on Fontana in Dublin. This work was bought – as Fontana’s – in 1872, only two decades after planning for a national gallery in Ireland began and six years after it opened to the public with only 112 pictures, many on loan from the National Gallery, London. As Aoife Brady recently suggested, the painting was probably purchased not only because it was made by a woman but also for its wall power as a large, impressive picture, with sumptuous details. Fontana is a major figure: she was the first Italian woman to paint and draw female nudes and the first to paint public pictures – the most prestigious and lucrative of all commissions. Her accomplishments marked a turning point for women artists in Italy.³⁵



Fig. 13 Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon*, dated 1599, oil on canvas, 251.7 x 326.5 cm, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, NGI.76 (Image © National Gallery of Ireland)

COLLECTING IN MUSEUMS IN THE USA

Turning to the USA, I see some similarities with the UK, but more US museums are well-funded private rather than national institutions, and government support is more limited. As in the UK, the earliest acquisitions were works on paper, beginning with prints and drawings by Sirani and engravings by Scultori that were gifted to Harvard University, Massachusetts in the late nineteenth century and are



Fig. 14 Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614), *Self-portrait*, about 1579, red and black chalk on paper, 16.4 x 14.5 cm, Morgan Library & Museum, New York, IV, 158b (© Morgan Library & Museum)

Table 5

Overview of US Collections, Purchases versus Donations:
Artworks by Italian Women Artists Working before 1800
(as of August 1, 2023)

Artwork type	Bought	Donated	Totals
Drawings	8	12	20
Prints	75	46	121
Pastels	6	8	14
Miniatures	2	2	4
Watercolour/Gouache/Tempera	3	1	4
Paintings	17	28	45
Sculptures	1	1	2
Total numbers	112 (53%)	98 (47%)	210

Artwork type	Bought Before 2000	Bought After 2000	Donated Before 2000	Donated After 2000	Totals
Drawings	4	4	12	0	20
Prints	67	8	44	2	121
Pastels	2	4	8	0	14
Miniatures	2	0	1	1	4
Watercolour/Gouache/Tempera	1	2	1	0	4
Paintings	5	12	20	8	45
Sculptures	0	1	1	0	2
Totals	81 (39%)	31 (15%)	87 (41%)	11 (5%)	210

Percentages are rounded.
Based on data from 38 US museums.
Sketchbooks and books of woodcuts are tabulated here as single items.
For details, see Spreadsheet 4.

now part of the Fogg Museum (part of the Harvard Art Museums). But in contrast to the UK, in the USA these prints and drawings were not usually part of large collections. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston was the first US museum to buy artworks by an Italian woman, purchasing four Sirani etchings and (in a separate transaction) two Scultori engravings in 1897. 20 years later, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (the Met) began buying engravings by Scultori, 43 between 1917 and 1971.³⁶

In 1909, Pierpont Morgan bought the first drawings by an Italian woman to be acquired for a US museum, becoming part of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York at its founding in 1924. That album of 19 chalk portrait drawings ascribed to Lavinia Fontana makes the Morgan one of the two largest repositories of her drawings today, along with the Uffizi Gallery. Thanks principally to these two collections, Fontana is known today in some 35 extant drawings – far more than any of her female contemporaries.³⁷ As I’ve noted, few women artists are still known in extant drawings. Of some 250 women artists recorded by name in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, only six percent can be credited even



Fig. 15 Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–after 1654), *Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, about 1623–25, oil on canvas, 187.2 x 142 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, 52.253 (© Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. Leslie H. Green)

with drawings of uncertain attribution. Fewer still have significant identifiable oeuvres on paper.³⁸

It was not until 1942 that a US museum purchased a painting ascribed to an Italian woman: the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut bought a handsome *Still Life* as the work of Fede Galizia, a seventeenth-century painter who was famous for her early still lifes. But as Oliver Tostmann has explained, this painting is no longer credited to Galizia – one of many examples illustrating the limited state of knowledge about women artists by the mid-twentieth century.³⁹

Museums in the USA were slow to acquire paintings by Italian women, and outright purchases were rare until the current century: US museums bought only five such paintings before the year 2000 (see Table 5 and Spreadsheet 4). In other words, donations and bequests supplied paintings far more frequently



Fig. 16 **Sofonisba Anguissola** (about 1535–1625), *Self-Portrait*, about 1556, oil (?) on parchment, 8.3 x 6.4 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 60.155 (Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Beth Munroe Fund—Bequest of Emma F. Munroe)

than purchases during that period: in 20 instances. Between 1931 and 1969, one painting by Sofonisba Anguissola and three by Lavinia Fontana entered the newly-established Walters Art Museum, Baltimore through a bequest from its founder, Henry Walters (1848–1931); Artemisia Gentileschi’s great *Judith and her Maidservant* (fig. 15) was gifted to the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit; and Fede Galizia’s self-portrait as *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1596) – a secure attribution this time that is signed on the blade of the sword – was donated to the Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota.⁴⁰

Only two museums bought paintings or miniatures by Italian women in the 1960s: the Boston Museum of Fine Arts’ fine early self-portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola (fig. 16); and the Columbus Museum of Art’s Ohio’s *Bathsheba* by Gentileschi. Interestingly, Boston’s *Self-Portrait* (about 1556), a miniature, was funded by the Emma F. Munroe Fund, which was designed explicitly to support acquisitions of miniatures by women artists. Little is currently known about this fund, but it is worth noting that more than 50 purchases and donations that contributed works of art by Italian women artists to



Fig. 17 **Artemisia Gentileschi** (1593–after 1654), *Esther before Ahasuerus*, about 1628–35, oil on canvas, 208.3 x 273.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 69.281 (© Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Elinor Dorrance Ingersoll, 1969)

museums in the USA were partially or entirely funded by female donors.⁴¹

But although there are many more paintings by Italian women in US than in UK museums today, as we can see by comparing Table 5 to Table 2, until the current century, only five were actually purchased by US museums before the year 2000. The Met’s paintings by Lavinia Fontana and Artemisia Gentileschi (fig. 17), for example, were both gifts in the 1960s, and to this day, the Met has yet to buy a painting by an Italian woman, apart from a miniature by Rosalba Carriera that was acquired in 1949. This situation for paintings contrasts with that for works on paper, which were bought more frequently, as exemplified by the Met’s many purchases of engravings by Scultori, noted above, and by the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s purchase of eight etchings and a drawing by Sirani in the 1980s. This pattern applies above all to prints: of the 121 etchings, engravings, and woodcuts by Italian women in US museums, 75 – about 62 percent – were bought rather than donated, constituting the largest majority of purchases for any type of artwork except watercolours (see Table 5).

During the twenty-first century, purchases in every category have accelerated in the USA, with 30 drawings, prints, pastels and especially paintings (in



Fig. 18 **Lavinia Fontana** (1552–1614), *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, about 1575–80, oil on copper, 47.3 x 36.2 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2022.28 (© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles)

addition to one sculpture) by Italian women bought by 16 different museums (see Table 5 and Spreadsheet 4). It is striking that more than 40 percent of the 38 museums in the USA with works of art by Italian women purchased some or all of those works during the past 23 years alone. In 2014, the Wadsworth Atheneum purchased only its second painting ascribed to an Italian woman: Gentileschi’s *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*.⁴² The Smith College Art Museum, Northampton, Massachusetts bought a fine self-portrait drawing by Elisabetta Sirani and two small oil paintings by Lavinia Fontana, constituting all three of its holdings by Italian women. The Getty recently purchased both a handsome painting on copper and its preparatory drawing, both by Fontana (fig. 18), bringing the number of its acquisitions by Italian women during the current century up to six. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts bought two paintings by Italian women in 2022 alone, bringing the total number of its artworks by Italian women up to 24.⁴³ And both the Fogg Museum and Rhode



Fig. 19 **Lavinia Fontana** (1552–1614), *Lucia Bonasoni Garzoni*, about 1590, oil on canvas, 113.5 x 87.5 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2022.38.1 (Courtesy © National Gallery of Art, Washington)

Island School of Design (RISD) made their first purchases by Italian women in this period: a pastel by Rosalba Carriera for the Fogg (in 2018); and both a drawing and an etching by Elisabetta Sirani for RISD (in 2018 and 2019 respectively).

But sadly, many major museums in the USA, like many in the UK, still do not own a single painting by an Italian woman. The National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. only recently and dramatically escaped this status, buying Lavinia Fontana’s portrait of the musician *Lucia Bonasoni Garzoni* (fig. 19) in 2022, and two additional purchases just announced in March 2023.⁴⁴ Such acquisitions confirm that artworks by Italian women are still available and more appreciated than ever.

CONCLUSIONS

At this point, I’d like to consider more broadly how and when these artworks were acquired in the UK and the USA, both countries in which many different museums own works by Italian women artists. In the UK, 17 museums (in addition to six noble collections) possess works convincingly assigned to Italian women artists. If we include the six noble collections, there are 260 artworks by Italian women in UK collections; leaving the noble collections aside, there are 184.

As Tables 2 and 3 show, including the noble collections changes matters significantly. With those collections, the number of works of art increases by more than 40 percent, due principally to the many drawings ascribed to Elisabetta Sirani at Windsor Castle. Moreover, with the noble collections included most artworks – 53 percent – were purchased; but without those six collections, the situation is reversed, with a much larger majority of works – 64 percent – donated. So, for the moment, let’s leave the noble collections out of the equation in comparing UK and US museums’ collecting histories.

Without the noble collections, there are 26 more artworks by Italian women artists in the USA than in the UK (210 and 184); but if we include the holdings of the six noble collections, there are 50 more artworks in the UK (260 and 210). The American works are more widely dispersed amongst 38 museums, compared to 17 UK museums (and six pertinent noble collections). The distribution of works is quite different if we compare media: British museums, which began collecting works on paper earlier and more often acquired them in large lots, possess many more prints than the US (144 versus 121) and almost as many drawings (17 versus 20) even without the noble collections, and a much larger number of drawings including the six noble collections, which bring the total number of drawings in the UK up to 65. US museums, however, own many more paintings: 45, in contrast to only nine in UK museums and 17 including noble collections.

These differences should be understood in the context of how works were acquired – that is, through purchases versus donations or bequests (see Tables 2, 3, and 5). This is where it is helpful to leave the noble UK collections out of the statistics, since they all bought a sizeable majority of their works (93 percent) by Italian women. Without the noble collections, most works in the UK – 64 percent – came from donations rather than purchases, a distinction that holds true for every type of artwork. Unlike UK museums, US museum holdings are dominated by purchases, which account for 53 percent of their works by Italian women. Moreover, gifting to US museums has diminished while purchases have increased, with the 42 acquisitions during the current century dominated by purchases – which constitute about 74 percent of all recent acquisitions by US museums. Thus, it seems very likely that this imbalance between gifts and purchases will become even more pronounced over time. This acceleration in purchases by US museums is especially true for paintings: more than a quarter of the 45 paintings by Italian women in US museums have been bought since the year 2000 – in less than a quarter-century. During this same period, only one pertinent painting was bought by a UK museum: the National Gallery’s painting by Artemisia Gentileschi. This growing imbalance may raise some alarms for many of us and should perhaps stimulate collectors and contributors to be generous in supporting such acquisitions in the UK. If we hypothesise that purchases more often reflect deliberate goals for museums, in contrast to gifts, there’s something to be said for institutions that purposefully buy works by women artists. Although it is apparently the only museum in Ireland with works of art by Italian women artists, the National Gallery of Ireland also has a record that is weighted to deliberate acquisitions/purchases of artworks by Italian women artists. Although their five purchases constitute only about 46 percent of their pictures by Italian women, the six pastels by Rosalba Carriera in the NGI were all obtained as the result of a single donation, in 1902.

Let’s return to a question I posed at the outset of this lecture: why have museums taken so long to develop

the current strong interest in women artists from Early Modern Italy? Although we are still learning about the historical importance of women’s contributions, our knowledge has advanced greatly since the nineteenth century, when many museums in these three countries were established and began collecting. One qualified exception to this increased knowledge is Marietta Robusti, the daughter of Jacopo Robusti, il Tintoretto (about 1518–1594), whose paintings are part of the National Gallery’s great collection of sixteenth-century Venetian paintings. Marietta’s situation illustrates some of the obstacles to understanding women’s artistic production from this period. She was praised by early Venetian writers, but her first biographers had more to say about her personal attributes, such as her beauty and virtue, than her pictures. Both her birth and death dates are currently unknown. Moreover, Marietta seems not to have signed her paintings, leaving scholars with scant foundation for attributions. Her *oeuvre* today is problematic, with no securely accepted works. One recent writer termed her a ‘*pittore senza opera*’, a painter without works.⁴⁵ It’s difficult to make a strong case for an acquisition by an artist when there is so little certainty of authorship.

For other painters, however, we have much more information. Scholarship on Artemisia Gentileschi in particular has expanded enormously since Mary Garrard published the first monograph on the artist in 1989.⁴⁶ Artemisia’s extraordinary accomplishments have been aptly commemorated by the National Gallery, London, with both the purchase of a major painting and the sensational recent exhibition curated by Letizia Treves.⁴⁷ Artemisia is unusual among the artists I’ve discussed in many ways; one is the paucity of known drawings by her.⁴⁸ Since the earliest works by Italian women to enter museum collections were prints or drawings, it is a testament to Artemisia’s gifts that she overcame this disadvantage to the early collectability of her works. Rediscovered letters, documents, signatures and paintings have enhanced our knowledge of her production. Moreover, unlike Marietta, Artemisia frequently signed her paintings.

In Bologna, women painters signed even more often: Fontana signed about half and Sirani some 70 percent of her pictures. And as I have noted, our knowledge of their careers is also deepened by the factual treatment they received in early biographies. Malvasia’s biography of Sirani includes her own list of almost 200 works, another tool for confirming authorship. Sirani’s contemporaries considered her the artistic heir to Guido Reni, burying her, after her premature death at the age of 27, in the same tomb with Reni in the Bolognese church of San Domenico.⁴⁹

Many factors impact museum acquisitions, and a thorough study of this subject would need to take many issues into account, including the evolution of taste in each country and the specific financial circumstances, acquisition procedures and personalities within each individual museum. It would also be interesting to explore whether the presence of female curators and/or directors impacted the attention to acquiring works by women artists.⁵⁰ But I would argue that the greatest obstacle to acquiring works by Italian women has been our limited knowledge about them, which long impeded identifications of their works by scholars, dealers and museums. After the National Gallery in London was founded in 1824, Anna Jameson advocated for greater universality in the collection, including specifically early Italian pictures. As Avery-Quash has shown, this goal was shared by the director, Sir Charles Eastlake, who acquired many such pictures.⁵¹ But in the nineteenth century, ‘women artists’ was not understood as a collecting category; indeed, during this period, when museums were first establishing chronological organisations of museum displays, the very idea of such categories was in its inception. Now that we better understand the achievements of Italian women artists, museums will likely acquire their works with greater frequency.

In conclusion, I see three main reasons for optimism. First and foremost, there’s the high quality of their art, which explains why Italian women were celebrated by early writers and collected by early, eminent



Fig. 20 **Elisabetta Sirani** (1638–1665), *Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting*, signed and dated 1658, oil on canvas, 114 x 85 cm, Pushkin Museum, Moscow, 70 (© Heritage Images / Fine Art Images / akg-images)

patrons. Second, despite the once-limited knowledge about Italian women artists, museums in these three countries still managed to collect over 450 of their works, frequently beginning at the museum’s inception. These numbers suggest that some leading Italian women artists were accepted as part of the canon for far longer than we have supposed. And finally, many women recognised their own talents, and they often created self-portraits. Artemisia Gentileschi once wrote forcefully and confidently to a patron: ‘I will show you what a woman can do!’⁵² Elisabetta Sirani’s *Self Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (fig. 20) makes an equally cogent visual statement: portraying herself in rich clothing and jewels, crowned with poet’s laurel and surrounded by books and statuettes that testify to her erudition, Sirani proudly signed her painting in gold letters, ensuring that her authorship would not be forgotten.⁵³

NOTES

- 1 I am also deeply grateful to many other curators and scholars who generously shared their expertise for this project, including particularly: Andaleeb Badiie Banta, Aoife Brady, Beverly Brown, Marietta Cambarelli, Danielle Carrabino, Hugo Chapman, Martin Clayton, Lucy Davis, Adele Ernstrom, Hilary Fraser, Kelly Gottardo, Alexa Greist, Megan Holmes, Linda Hughes, Frederick Ilchman, Joanna Karlgaard, Christopher Kelly, Alicia LaTores, Grant Lewis, Allison Logan, Sarah Mackay, Judith Mann, Rosalind McKeever, Kate O’Donoghue, Caroline Palmer, Carol Plazzotta, Robert Simon, Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, Oliver Tostmann, Virginia Treanor, Letizia Treves, Catherine Whistler and Félix Zorzo.
- 2 For selected citations, see below. Another key secondary source on Jameson is Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson, Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, London 1997.
- 3 See especially Chad M. Topaz, Bernhard Klingenberg, Daniel Turek, Brianna Heggeseeth, Pamela E. Harris, Julie C. Blackwood, C. Ondine Chavoya, Steven Nelson and Kevin Murphy, ‘Diversity of artists in major U.S. museums’, March 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212852>, accessed 7 February 2024, which examines artistic genders, ethnicities, geographic origins and birth decades in 18 major American museums. Some journalistic studies have also examined the issue of diversity (for example, see Margaret Carrigan, ‘Black American women artists represent 0.1% of auction sales’, *The Art Newspaper*, 352, January 2023, p. 30).
- 4 For information on the provenance and acquisition of these works and of most works of art discussed in this lecture, my initial source was the museum’s website, frequently augmented by both publications and correspondence with individual curators, who kindly answered my questions about their collections. Collection websites are not cited here, but pertinent publications and resources on individual artists, collections and artworks are cited specifically, below.
- 5 I am grateful to Hugo Brown for kindly supplying me with these detailed statistics on the Gallery’s collection.
- 6 Anna Jameson, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*, 2 vols, London 1834, vol. 2, p. 119. In the longer passage from which this phrase is taken, Jameson specifically praises several Italian women artists, including Rosalba Carriera, Elisabetta Sirani, Sofonisba Anguissola, Marietta Robusti and Artemisia Gentileschi, although at the end of the discussion, she concludes that women artists were all characterised by feminine qualities and should not be equated with male artists (pp. 119–21).
- 7 Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a’ tempi nostri*, Florence 1550, Reprint, ed. Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi, Turin 1986, pp. 773–76. See the illuminating discussion of this biography in Fredrika H. Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance “Virtuosa”: Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism*, Cambridge 1997.
- 8 Babette Bohn, *Women Artists, Their Patrons and Their Publics in Early Modern Bologna*, University Park, PA 2021.
- 9 See Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: Vite de’ pittori bolognesi*, 2 vols., Bologna 1678, vol. 1, pp. 219–24 (Lavinia Fontana), vol. 2, pp. 451–82 (Elisabetta Sirani).

- 10 Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, vol. 2, p. 278 (‘...non oprò mai da donna, e più che da huomo....’).
- 11 On Sirani’s *Allegory and Cupid*, see Jadranka Bentini and Vera Fortunati, eds., *Elisabetta Sirani “pittrice eroina” 1638–1665*, exhibition catalogue, Bologna 2004, pp. 230–32, cat. nos. 84–5; and Adelina Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani ‘Virtuosa’: Women’s Cultural Production in Early Modern Bologna*, Turnhout 2014, pp. 283–84, no. 60 and pp. 334–36, no. 112. The *Cupid* was painted for the marriage of Cosimo de’ Medici with Margherita Luisa di Borbone in 1661; the *Allegory* is signed and dated 1664. Cardinal Leopoldo also collected drawings by both Fontana and Sirani; see Bohn, *Women Artists*, pp. 176 and 272, n. 16.
- 12 Gaetano Giordani, *Notizie delle donne pittrici di Bologna*, Bologna 1832. Although Eastlake owned many of Giordani’s publications, he evidently did not possess this book, judging from the holdings now in the National Gallery’s library.
- 13 Carolina Bonafede, *Cenni biografici e ritratti d’insigni: Donne bolognesi, raccolti dagli storici più accreditati*, Bologna 1845, pp. i–ii. Bonafede’s nineteen biographies treat distinguished Bolognese women who practiced various vocations, not only artists. She explains that she hopes these biographies will provide her female compatriots with models for imitation, and she asserts that no other city can claim such an abundance of talented women.
- 14 Hilary Fraser, *Women Writing Art History in the Nineteenth Century: Looking Like a Woman (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)*, Cambridge 2014.
- 15 Adele Holcomb, ‘Anna Jameson on Women Artists’, *Woman’s Art Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1987, pp. 15–24.
- 16 The drawing ascribed to Sirani, *Cupid forging his arrow*, a brush drawing in brown wash over black chalk on light brown prepared paper, is British Museum inv. no. SL,5237.72. The three engravings by Diana Scultori are: inv. nos. V,4.119; V,8.2; and V,8.21 (illustrated). On the Sloane bequest, see Antony Griffiths, ‘Sir Hans Sloane (1650–1753)’, in Antony Griffiths ed., *Landmarks in Print Collecting: Connoisseurs and Donors at the British Museum since 1753*, London 1996, pp. 21–42.
- 17 Richard Fitzwilliam, 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam, was an enthusiastic collector of European prints, leaving over 40,000 to the University of Cambridge at his death. See Lucilla Burn, *The Fitzwilliam Museum: A History*, Cambridge 2016, especially pp. 24–27. Burn hypothesizes that Lord Fitzwilliam’s decision to leave his art collections to his former university was part of ‘the wider contemporary movement to establish public art galleries in England’ (p. 28).
- 18 Sirani’s *Infant Saint John the Baptist* is signed and dated 1664; see Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani*, pp. 329–30, no. 107. The drawing that I believe was a preparatory study for the picture (not, to my knowledge, previously connected with that work) is Windsor inv. no. RCIN 906377. It was previously connected with another picture by the artist (Modesti, *Elisabetta Sirani*, p. 265).
- 19 On the remarkable art collection of King Charles I, as well as the sale and later recovery for the Crown of these works, see Francis Haskell, *The King’s Pictures: The Formation and dispersal of the Collections of Charles I and his Courtiers*, ed. Karen Serres, London 2013; and Desmond Shawe-Taylor and Per Rumberg, eds., *Charles I: King and Collector*, exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy of Art, London 2018. The painting now ascribed to Fede Galizia was formerly considered a Dutch picture.
- 20 Artemisia’s *Susanna and the Elders* is signed and dated 1622; see Letizia Treves, ed., *Artemisia*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery, London 2020, cat. no. 22. Elisabetta’s *Judith* is signed and dated 1658; on this work and its patron, for whom she produced seven paintings, see Bohn, *Women Artists*, pp. 86–90 and 139. On the collection at Burghley House, see Hugh Brigstocke and John Somerville, *Italian Paintings at Burghley House*, exhibition catalogue, Alexandria, VA 1995.
- 21 On Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894), see J. Anderson, ‘Layard, Sir Austen Henry’, in J. Turner et al. eds., *Grove Art Online*, Oxford 1998, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T049724>, accessed 7 February 2024.
- 22 Rosalba’s *Self Portrait* pastel was created very shortly before she went blind and was a gift from the artist to Joseph Smith, the British Consul to Venice and a frequent patron, before it was purchased from Smith by King George III. See Michael Levey, *The Later Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1991, pp. 64–65, cat. no. 446 and plate 93.
- 23 According to Bernardina Sani, the *Portrait of a Man* probably represents a Venetian gentleman and is datable to around 1750 (*Rosalba Carriera*, Turin 1988, cat. no. 165), but the work is currently dated by the Gallery to the 1720s.
- 24 See the fascinating account in Susanna Avery-Quash and Jemma Craig, *Creating a National Collection: The Partnership between Southampton City Art Gallery and the National Gallery*, exhibition catalogue, Southampton 2021, pp. 57–58 and 70, cat. no. 11. On the picture, see also Michael W. Cole, *Sofonisba’s Lesson: A Renaissance Artist and Her Work*, Princeton, NJ 2019, pp. 164–65, no. 12.
- 25 Another painting in the Bowes Museum is less convincingly attributed to Fontana; see Spreadsheet 1.
- 26 K.T. Parker, *Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum, Vol. 2: Italian Schools*, Oxford 1972, pp. 479–80, cat. nos. 952–54. My thanks to Caroline Palmer for kindly supplying me with information, including Parker’s Keeper’s reports on these three acquisitions. Unfortunately, none of this material explains Parker’s interest in Elisabetta Sirani’s drawings.
- 27 Private correspondence. I am grateful to Dr McKever for her generous assistance in tracing the provenances of Italian women’s artworks in the V&A.
- 28 On the Librarian Richard Dalton’s acquisitions of drawings for King George III, see Denis Mahon and Nicholas Turner, *The Drawings of Guercino in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, Cambridge 1989, pp. xxii–xxvii.
- 29 This pattern is less applicable, however, to British noble collections, which purchased most of their holdings for every type of artwork; see Table 3.
- 30 I am thinking particularly of Linda Nochlin’s ‘Why have there been no great women artists?’, first published in 1971, and the exhibition catalogue, co-authored by Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris in 1976, *Women Artists 1550–1950*, Los Angeles County Museum.
- 31 See Treves, *Artemisia*, p. 140, cat. no. 11.
- 32 See the series of short films on the restoration of the picture, all available through the National Gallery’s website at: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/behind-the-scenes/restoring-artemisia>, accessed 7 February 2024.

- 33 See Aoife Brady, Maria Canavan and Letizia Marcattili, *The Crowning Glory: Lavinia Fontana’s Queen of Sheba and King Solomon*, Dublin 2021.
- 34 Most of the provenance information on these works in Dublin is available on the museum website; but some key facts and observations were kindly provided to me by Aoife Brady, the curator at the NGI who organized the recent, important exhibition on Lavinia Fontana (*Lavinia Fontana, Trailblazer, Rule Breaker*, exhibition catalogue, Dublin 2023).
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 126–35, cat. no. 51.
- 36 Most (forty-three) of the Met’s fifty-two engravings by Scultori were purchased, in contrast to only nine that were donated.
- 37 On Fontana’s drawings, see Bohn, *Women Artists*, pp. 173–81.
- 38 See Babette Bohn, ‘Designing Women: Drawings by Women Artists in Early Modern Italy’, in Andaleeb Badiee Banta and Alexa Greist, with Theresa Kutasz Christensen, eds., *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400–1800*, exhibition catalogue, Toronto and Baltimore 2023, pp. 42–57.
- 39 Now credited to the so-called Master of the Hartford Still Life, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, seventeenth century. See Oliver Tostmann, ‘By Her Hand: Personal Thoughts and Reflections on an Exhibition’, 2021, <https://artherstory.net/by-her-hand-personal-thoughts-and-reflections-on-an-exhibition/>, accessed 7 February 2024.
- 40 The paintings in the Walters are: Sofonisba Anguissola, *Portrait of Massimiliano Stampa, Marquess of Soncino*; and three by Lavinia Fontana: the *Annunciation*, *Portrait of Ginevra Aldrovandi Hercolani*, and *Portrait of Girolamo Mercuriale*. On Artemisia Gentileschi’s painting in Detroit and Fede Galizia’s picture in Sarasota, see most recently Eve Straussman-Pflanzer and Oliver Tostmann, eds., *By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800*, exhibition catalogue, New Haven 2021, pp. 108–111, cat. no. 27 and pp. 94–98, cat. no. 20.
- 41 The number is probably higher, but even this conservative estimate confirms that women played a significant role in contributing to the representation of Italian women artists in US museums. For details, see Spreadsheet 4. I am grateful to Frederick Ilchman and Marietta Cambareri for helping me to investigate this fund at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
- 42 See Straussman-Pflanzer and Tostmann, eds., *By Her Hand*, pp. 101–03, cat. no. 24.
- 43 Many of these works will be featured in an exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (from 9 September 2023 to 7 January 2024), with a catalogue by Marietta Cambareri, *Strong Women in Renaissance Italy*.
- 44 Caterina Angela Pierozzi’s *Annunciation* (signed and dated 1677) is in gouache on vellum and so is not categorized in Spreadsheet 4 as a painting. Fede Galizia’s *Still Life* (about 1625–30), however, is in oil on canvas. My thanks to Eve Straussman-Pflanzer for kindly supplying images and information on these three works.
- 45 Melania G. Mazzucco, *Jacomo Tintoretto e i suoi figli: Storia di una famiglia veneziana*, Milan 2009, p. 353. For further discussion of Marietta and her Venetian biographers, see Bohn, *Women Artists*, p. 17.
- 46 Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art*, Princeton, NJ 1989.
- 47 Treves, *Artemisia*.
- 48 On the handful of drawings that have been ascribed to Artemisia, see Bohn, ‘Designing Women’, p. 48.
- 49 Sirani’s death was commemorated by a lavish funeral in San Domenico, with an elaborate (and ephemeral) catafalque designed by Matteo Borboni (1610–1689) and engraved by Lorenzo Tinti (1626–1672). A lengthy funeral oration and catafalque description is in Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, Bologna, vol. 2, pp. 455–62. See also Bohn, *Women Artists*, pp. 20–22.
- 50 Admittedly, until very recently, there have been relatively few female directors, with some conspicuous exceptions. One striking exception is the National Gallery in Canada, which enjoyed three important female directors during the late twentieth century. See Diana Nemiroff, *Women at the Helm: How Jean Sutherland Boggs, Hsio-yen Shih, and Shirley L. Thomson Changed the National Gallery of Canada*, Montreal 2021.
- 51 Susanna Avery-Quash, ‘Illuminating the Old Masters and Enlightening the British Public: Anna Jameson and the Contribution of British Women to Empirical Art History in the 1840s’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, vol. 28, 2019, pp. 1–32. See also Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World*, London 2011.
- 52 This statement appears in a letter from Artemisia in Naples to her patron Antonio Ruffo (1610/11–1678) in Messina. For an insightful analysis of Artemisia’s thirteen letters to Ruffo, all written in the last five years of her life, see Treves, *Artemisia*, p. 27.
- 53 All tables and appendices were completed on August 1 2023. Since then, artworks by Italian women have continued to be acquired by museums. Most notably, the Royal Collection rediscovered an important painting by Artemisia Gentileschi, a *Susanna and the Elders* datable to about 1638–39 that was probably painted for Queen Henrietta Maria during Artemisia’s stay in London. See Niko Munz and Adelaide Izat, ‘Artemisia Gentileschi’s ‘Susanna and the elders’ painted for Henrietta Maria’, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 165, no. 1447, 2023, pp. 1053–73.