

# Drawing the Masters: The Formation of Giovan Battista Bassi and the Methods of the Accademia Clementina

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**Abstract** This article expands our understanding of the formation and early career of the landscape painter Giovan Battista Bassi (Massa Lombarda, 1784-Rome, 1852), and, in particular, of his time at the Accademia Clementina in Bologna. An investigation of his production – with a focus on four Bassi drawings – paired with an analysis of newly discovered archival documents reveals that the Academy's landscape painting students began by studying etchings of famous artists, such as Giovan Battista Piranesi, from the collection of Pope Benedict XIV. From these etchings they borrowed various elements, which can be clearly identified in their invented and idealised landscapes. For their annual end-of-year exam, students were challenged to reproduce actual landscapes, creating unique compositions based on real environments. An analysis of Bassi's artistic evolution during his studies at the Academy, under Bolognese master Vincenzo Martinelli, together with an investigation of the Academy's archives, sheds light not only on Bassi's formation but also on the pedagogical methods employed in the Academy before its 1803 closure.

**Keywords** Giovan Battista Bassi. Vincenzo Martinelli. Angelo Venturoli. Pope Benedict XIV. Giovan Battista Piranesi. Stefano Della Bella. Masters. Pupils. Landscape. Drawing. Accademia Clementina. Massa Lombarda. Bologna. Rome.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Pope Benedict XIV's Etchings as Models. – 3 The Final Exams. – 4 The Educational System at the Accademia Clementina.

## 1 Introduction

A group of drawings made at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, currently found in collections in Massa Lombarda (Ravenna) and Venice, shed light on the early activity of Giovan Battista Bassi (1784-1852) and reveal the pedagogical methods used to train landscape painters at the *Accademia Clementina* in its final years, before its closure in 1803 and rebirth the same year as the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. Bassi was the preeminent Italian landscape painter active in Rome in the first half of the Nineteenth century, internationally

famous and admired by collectors and artists. In 1814, Antonio Canova (1757-1822)

Volle adornato il suo studio in Roma di due paesi del Bassi, al quale, finché visse, fu legato di carissima amicizia.

wanted to adorn his studio in Rome with two paintings by Bassi, to which, as long as he lived, he was linked with dearest friendship. (Perticari 1823, 518)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Only one of the two paintings is known. Cf. Passamani 1978, 42, no. 193, repr.; Guderzo 2000, 44, no. 17, repr. (in color). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.



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**Figure 1** Giovan Battista Bassi, *Ideal View of the Roman Forum*. 1800 ca. Graphite, pen, brown ink and watercolour on paper, laid down on canvas, 355 × 710 mm. Massa Lombarda, Centro Culturale 'Carlo Venturini', 3494. © Regione Emilia-Romagna, Settore Patrimonio culturale, Catalogo PatER

A few years later, the Danish artist, Berthel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844), acquired four canvases that became part of the museum he established in Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup> Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) wanted to visit Bassi's atelier during his first Italian tour in 1819, as evidenced by the presence of Bassi's name in a well-known list, created by Turner, of landscape painters active in Rome.<sup>3</sup> It was in this city that Bassi established himself as a landscape painter. And yet, despite his talent and influence, little is known about his beginnings and his formation at Bologna's Accademia Clementina.

Bassi was born in Massa Lombarda, a small town between Ravenna and Bologna. He took his first drawing lessons from a local architect, Zaccaria Facchini (1751-1826), between 1799 and 1800 (Quadri 1989, 61).<sup>4</sup> No trace has yet been found of these early drawings.

In the fall of 1800, Bassi left his hometown for Bologna, thanks to assistance from the local *Comitato di Istruzione e Beneficenza* (Council for Education and Charity). In Bologna, Bassi enrolled in drawing and painting courses at the Academy, offered by Vincenzo Martinelli (1737-1807) the most famous Bolognese landscape painter of the second half of the Eighteenth century (cf. Cellura 2020). Martinelli mentions Bassi by name in an unpublished document where he lists the pupils present at his school between 1794 and 1803, together with the names of each students' teacher, making it possible to establish the exact dates of Bassi's tenure at the Academy (Martinelli [1803?]). The name, «Giambattista Bassi dalla Massa Lombarda», (Giambattista Bassi from Massa Lombarda) appears beneath the date «20 Novembre 1800» (20 November 1800) followed by the symbol = and the name of his teacher, *Martinelli* (Martinelli [1803?], 19).

<sup>2</sup> Copenhagen, Thorvaldsens Museet, inv. B60, B61, B62, and B63.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *A List of Contemporary Landscape Artists Working in Rome*, London, Tate Gallery, inv. D16876 (Turner Bequest CXCIH 99; <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-a-list-of-contemporary-landscape-artists-working-in-rome-d16876>).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/zaccaria-facchini\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/zaccaria-facchini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/).



**Figure 2**  
Giovan Battista Bassi.  
Detail of Figure 1

## 2 Pope Benedict XIV's Etchings as Models

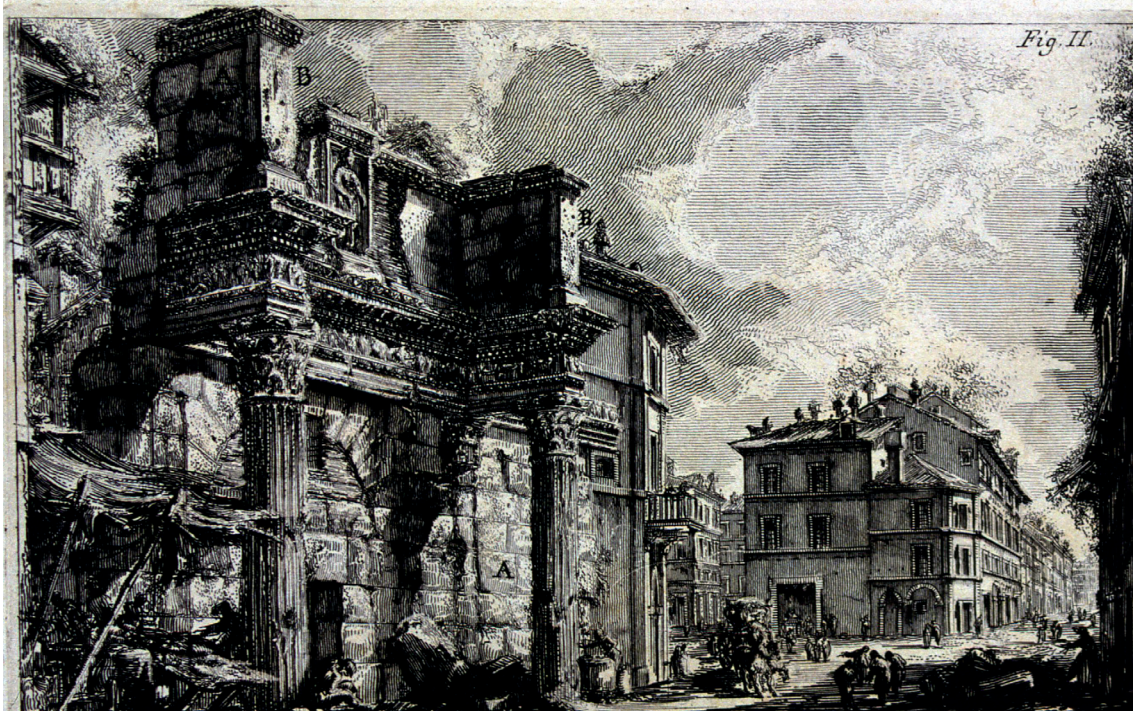
Bassi's first known drawing, possibly executed in his first months in Bologna, depicts an idealised view of the Roman Forum [fig. 1].<sup>5</sup> This work has been used as testimony of Bassi's first visit to Rome, a work likely executed during his stay in the city between March 1808 and April 1809, or completed directly following his sojourn, from studies made on-site.<sup>6</sup> However, a close examination of the drawing brings this hypothesis into question. The drawing was likely the first Bassi completed at the Academy, sometime between the end of 1800 and early 1801. On the left-hand side of the drawing we can see the *Colonnacce*, two Corinthian columns which adorn the northwest corner of the wall that encloses the Forum of Nerva. The columns are followed by a pyramidal monument, similar in form to the many obelisks that adorn Rome's squares. The Arch of Septimius Severus dominates the centre of the scene, its bottom half still partially submerged underground and, in the distance, a temple can be seen [fig. 2], its upper portion not entirely decipherable. The right-hand side of the drawing features a grotto and a cluster

of oak trees, an unusual species to see in a Roman landscape but beloved by Bassi's master, Martinelli. Small figures further animate the scene. If a viewer were to have placed himself in front of the *Colonnacce* in the same position that the young Bassi would have hypothetically occupied to capture scene, it would have been impossible for him to have seen the landscape depicted in Bassi's drawing. His view would have been crowded with dozens of small and medium sized houses, known to have been present in the area until the 1930s and 1940s when these dwellings were destroyed to facilitate the creation of the *Via dell'Impero* (modern day *Via dei Fori Imperiali*).<sup>7</sup> The view Bassi represents is an idealised one, a theme popular within the Bolognese and Emilian school, where landscapes were almost always constructed according to a set of scenographic and decorative principles (Matteucci 2002). It is likely Bassi created his drawing with the help of etchings depicting the Roman Forum, a task likely assigned to him by his teacher, Martinelli. This exercise enabled the master to evaluate the young artist's

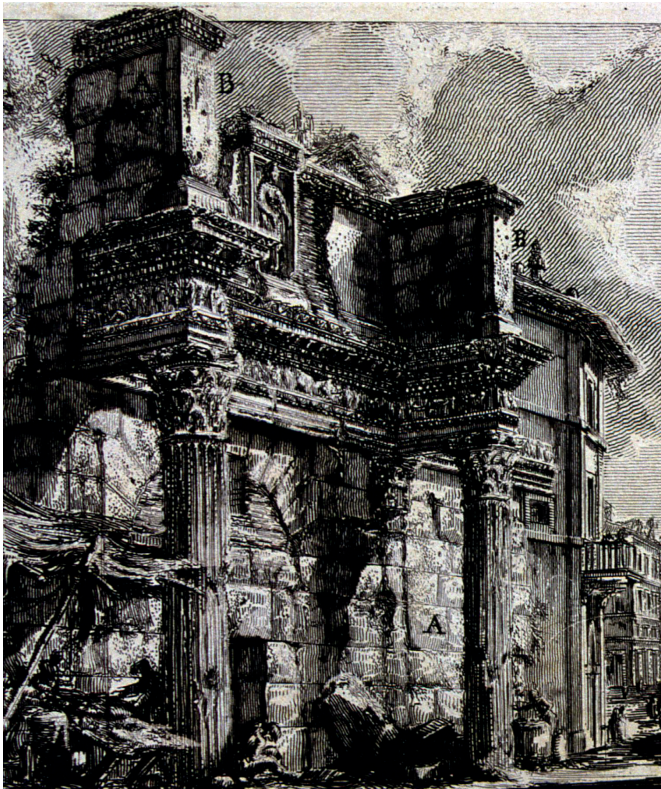
<sup>5</sup> See Quadri 1989, 69-70; Spada 2000, 49-50, repr. Cf. [https://bbcc.ibr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id\\_card=122615](https://bbcc.ibr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=122615).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nicosia 1985, 97; Gnisci 1992, 255. The collector and scholar Luigi Quadri (1856-1925) inscribed two dates (1810 and 1814) on the drawing's verso, following its acquisition in June 1911 (Spada 2000, 49).

<sup>7</sup> For a complete photographic documentation of the area, cf. Leone et al. 2009, 269 (fig. 4.456), 291 (fig. 4.498, in which we can see an ariel view captured before the fascist demolitions; the Arch of Septimius Severus is in the lower right), 297 (fig. 4.514), 314 (fig. 4.549), 328 (fig. 4.585), 333 (fig. 4.592; the *Colonnacce* are in the lower right, seen from behind).



**Figure 3** Giovan Battista Piranesi, *Veduta di altri avanzi del predetto Foro di Nerva detti le Colonnacce*. 1756. From *The Roman Antiquities*, vol. I, pl. XXX, Fig. II. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, 285.c.37. Etching, 132 × 199 mm. © Europeana



**Figure 4** Giovan Battista Piranesi. Detail of Figure 3



**Figure 5** Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 1



**Figure 6** Giovan Battista Piranesi, *Arco di Settimio Severo*, 1750-59 ca. Etching, 377 × 585 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, J.W.E. vom Rath Bequest, RP-P-1941-624. © Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum



**Figure 7** Giovan Battista Piranesi. Detail of Figure 6



**Figure 8** Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 1



**Figure 9** Here attributed to Giovan Battista Bassi, *Rocky Landscape with the Rest on the Flight in Egypt*. 1801 ca. Watercolour, 510 × 380 mm. Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Antonio Certani collection, 34436. © Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini

ability to copy and take inspiration from a selection of etchings in order to create a new landscape. The Colonnacce and the Arch appear to be taken from two prints by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778). The first etching comes from *Le Antichità Romane* (The Roman Antiquities; 1756) and depicts the Forum of Nerva with the Colonnacce [figs 3-4].<sup>8</sup> Piranesi's etching is likely the first and undoubtedly the most authoritative representation of this monument from this specific angle. Various details confirm Bassi studied Piranesi's etching; for example, the column fragments seen resting against the wall, visible in the foreground, next to the temple entrance [fig. 5]. There are also

some slight differences between Bassi and Piranesi's works, due primarily to the fact that Bassi was borrowing but not copying directly from Piranesi, a hypothesis confirmed by the different measurements of the two works.<sup>9</sup>

The second model for Bassi's drawing was a view of the Roman Forum with the Campidoglio palace, the Arch of Septimius Severus and the Church of Saints Martina and Luca which Bassi, or Martinelli on Bassi's behalf, selected from the *Vedute di Roma* (Views of Rome) series [fig. 6].<sup>10</sup> Careful observation of the triumphal arch depicted in Piranesi's etching reveals a key detail. Prior to 1803, the arch was largely buried under centuries

<sup>8</sup> Cf. <https://www.europeana.eu/item/447/GE00004350> (No Copyright - Other Known Legal Restrictions). See Wilton-Ely 1994, I: 327-8, 387, repr.; Garacci 2014, II: 144-5, no. 54, repr.

<sup>9</sup> The measurements of Piranesi's temple are ca. 65 mm; Bassi's temple measures ca. 170 mm.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.164927> (Public Domain). Cf. Villa Salamon 1978, 45, repr.; Wilton-Ely 1994, I: 176, 208, repr.; Höper 1999, 253-96, 381-96.

of dirt and debris, its two lateral arches closed with doors, visible if the arch was viewed from the side facing into the Forum and away from the Campidoglio [fig. 7]. One of its lateral arches, on the right-hand side, was outfitted as the entrance to a fruit and vegetable shop.<sup>11</sup> Centuries of floods from the Tiber River buried many of Rome's ancient monuments.<sup>12</sup> It was only in 1803, following a declaration of Pope Pius VII (1742-1823), that the first excavations and cleanings of monuments in the Roman Forum were undertaken (Caldana 2013, 381, no. V.36). If Bassi had done a drawing from life of Arch of Septimius Severus during his first trip to Rome in 1808, he would never have depicted a buried arch [fig. 8]. It is also possible to note the difference in perspective between Bassi and Piranesi's works. To bring elements from different etchings into harmony with one another, Bassi understood the necessity of creating a single vanishing point. This led him to reposition Piranesi's arch, forcing it to align with the strong diagonal vanishing line of the Colonnacce. While the frontispiece of *Vedute di Roma* (Villa Salamon 1978, 6-7) includes a monument similar to an obelisk (visible in the top left), the pyramidal monument Bassi inserts between the Temple of Nerva and the Arch seems to be based on a model used by Bassi's master, who incorporates a similar structure into various artworks.<sup>13</sup> Bassi's drawing is therefore an excellent demonstration of his ability to select and unify artistic elements from different etchings, even taken from the oeuvres of different artists, in one unique artwork.

Piranesi's etchings were studied and imitated at the Bolognese academy. Their study was made possible by a donation of the first edition of four volumes of *Le Antichità Romane*, gifted to the Accademia Clementina by Pope Benedict XIV (1675-1758) in 1757.<sup>14</sup> Piranesi's etchings were also appreciated beyond the academy's walls, collected by Bolognese aristocrats including Carlo Filippo Aldrovandi (1763-1823), avid collector of etchings and benefactor of young artists (Matteucci 1974, 88), who

owned the *Diverse Maniere d'Adornare i Cammini* (Diverse Ways of adorning Chimneys; 1767-1769) series, and *quadraturista* and scenographic artist Vincenzo Mazza (?-1788). These collectors afforded young artists the opportunity to study important works on paper, as noted by Antonio Basoli (1774-1848), a colleague of Bassi's, who mentioned these study opportunities in diary entries from 1787, 1799 and 1804 (Farneti, Riccardi Scassellati Sforzolini 2006, 31, 51, 73). By identifying Piranesi's etchings as models for the work of the Academy's pupils between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, it becomes easier to date Bassi's drawing of the Forum to his first year of study in Bologna, and confirm that Piranesi inspired the first known drawing Bassi produced under Martinelli's tutelage.

Among the collection of the cellist, Antonio Certani (1879-1952), conserved at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, it is possible to identify seven drawings created by the same artist.<sup>15</sup> These works lack signatures and dates; they have been thus far attributed to Martinelli by the scholars Cesare Gnudi and Mario Massacesi, in their study of the Certani Collection, conducted in 1955. A close examination of these seven works reveals they are not Martinelli drawings but instead should be attributed to his young pupil, Bassi.<sup>16</sup> These drawings, one of which is shown here [fig. 9] reproduce, with small variations, etchings made by Dutch artist Herman van Swanevelt (1603-1655), between 1650 and 1655, and provide further proof of the use of sixteenth-century etchings in the artistic circles of Bologna. The unpublished drawing, which depicts a *Rest on the Flight to Egypt*, can be dated to just after the completion of the idealised view of the Roman Forum. Indeed, it shows a more advanced pictorial technique, as can be seen through the precise execution in the rendering of trees and figures and in the more measured brushwork.<sup>17</sup> It is probable that Bassi had studied Swanevelt etchings in Basoli's atelier (Farneti, Riccardi Scassellati Sforzolini 2006, 51) or, possibly, during courses with Martinelli.

<sup>11</sup> See a drawing by Felice Giani (1758-1823), friend and colleague of Bassi, drawn around the year 1800, in Lanciani 1897, 284, fig. 109.

<sup>12</sup> The issue of flooding in the city centre due to the overflowing of the Tiber River was resolved at the end of the nineteenth century with the construction of flood walls. Cf. Ravaglioli 1982; Allen 2019, 245-52.

<sup>13</sup> An example can be found in Cera 1994, "Martinelli", fig. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Zamboni 1963, 55-6; Emiliani, Gaeta Bertelà 1970.

<sup>15</sup> Fondazione Giorgio Cini, inv. nos. 34434, 34436-41.

<sup>16</sup> The seven sheets were presumably executed between his first and second academic year, given the slight difference in technical quality.

<sup>17</sup> One of the original etchings can be found at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (inv. no. RP-P-H-H-1304) and one of the drawings from which the etching derives is held at the Gabinetto dei disegni e stampe degli Uffizi in Florence (inv. no. 716).



**Figure 10** Giovan Battista Bassi, *View of Massa Lombarda*. 1801. Pen, brown ink and watercolour, 320 × 467 mm. Massa Lombarda, Centro Culturale 'Carlo Venturini', 622. © Regione Emilia-Romagna, Settore Patrimonio culturale, Catalogo PatER

### 3 The Final Exams

Bologna li 26 Pratile Anno 9 Rep. | Il presente disegno è stato ideato ed eseguito dal Cittad. Gio. Batta. Bassi da Massalombarda ascritto già allo studio dell'Accademia delle belle Arti, il quale è un anno, che | studia sotto la mia direzione. In fede Vincenzo Martinelli affermo.

Bologna 26 Prairial Year 9 of the Republic | The present drawing was created by citizen Gio. Batta. Bassi of Massalombarda student of the Fine Art Academy who | has studied under my direction for the past year. Sincerely, Vincenzo Martinelli.

With these words, noted on the recto of a drawing, Martinelli marks the successful conclusion of Bassi's first year of study at the Academy [fig. 10] (Nicosia 1985, 88-9).<sup>18</sup> The drawing in question depicts the east entrance to Massa Lombarda, seen from the outside of the Porta Celletta, destroyed in 1845; the Porta Lughesa would be built in its place in 1859 and later destroyed in 1949. Bassi's

drawing was sent to Massa Lombarda's City Hall in June 1801 as proof of his studies and improvement over the past year and likely to express gratitude for having facilitated his move to Bologna (Quadri 1911, 4-5; 1989, 61). It was likely Martinelli who suggested sending the drawing to Massa Lombarda, a part of his strategy for supporting his pupils. The note left by Martinelli at the bottom of the recto supports this hypothesis. To encourage other young, local artists, the drawing was hung immediately in one of the most important rooms of Massa Lombarda's City Hall. The scene is constructed similarly to the Forum drawing: oak trees frame the scene as the landscape recedes into the distance, in the centre of the drawing. Here, Bassi recycles (and slightly reduces) the group of trees present on the right-hand side of the Cini drawing [figs 11-12] and modifies the countryside surrounding Massa Lombarda, adding gentle hills to animate its otherwise flat terrain. Perhaps he chose to depict Massa Lombarda and not the Bolognese countryside (more easily accessible to him during

<sup>18</sup> Cf. [https://bbcc.ibr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id\\_card=122505](https://bbcc.ibr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=122505).





**Figure 11**  
Here attributed to Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 9

**Figure 12**  
Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 10

**Figure 13**  
Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 10



**Figure 14** Giovan Battista Bassi, *Veduta della Madonna di S. Luca di Bologna*, 1802. Pen, brown ink and watercolour, 255 × 413 mm. Massa Lombarda, Centro Culturale 'Carlo Venturini', 3327. © Regione Emilia-Romagna, Settore Patrimonio culturale, Catalogo PatER

his time at the Academy) because Martinelli had told him the drawing would be sent to Massa Lombarda as a testament to his first successful year of study. It is also possible that this landscape was drawn from life, developed from sketches made during a visit home and finished at the Academy, with the assistance of his instructor. His careful modelling of the figures, evident in the precise rendering of their clothes, is further testament to his artistic development at this stage [fig. 13].

To conclude his second year of studies, Bassi produced a drawing of a Bolognese landscape. The clean, confident brush strokes, the signature and the date of this drawing confirm it was completed at the closure of Bassi's second year [fig. 14].<sup>19</sup> This drawing depicts the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Saint Luke in Bologna, drawn from the fields above the last tract of Via Saragozza. At the time of Bassi's drawing, the sanctuary was already

a point of interest for pilgrims who gathered to venerate a Byzantine portrait of the Blessed Virgin of Saint Luke. The color palette employed in Bassi's artwork features delicate blues, grays and a light ochre typical of Bolognese painting fifty years prior, in the heyday of his master, Martinelli. Here, the oak trees are more sporadic<sup>20</sup> and the sanctuary dominates, its monumental structure juxtaposed with the small figures in the foreground [fig. 15]. These carefully rendered figures show Bassi's developing technique, proof of his progress at the Academy, especially when compared to the figures in the idealised view of the Forum. The three Bolognese figures could be 'pignattari,' sellers of pots, pans and other kitchen accessories; their basket bears resemblance to a basket found in etchings by Simon Guillain (1589-1658), made after drawings by Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) dedicated to 'mestieri' (professions), published in

<sup>19</sup> Bassi sent this drawing to Massa Lombarda in July 1802. Cf. Quadri 1989, 61; Spada 2000, 42-3, repr. Cf. [https://bbcc.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id\\_card=122513](https://bbcc.ibc.regione.emilia-romagna.it/pater/loadcard.do?id_card=122513).

<sup>20</sup> In this work Bassi also uses a group of trees visible in an earlier drawing. The trees in light blue on the right-hand side are indeed taken, although with small variations, from a river scene among the six Certani sheets (inv. no. 34439).



Figure 15 Giovan Battista Bassi. Detail of Figure 14

1646.<sup>21</sup> A group of etchings created by Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634-1718), published between 1660 and 1700, depict bread sellers with a very similar basket.<sup>22</sup> In Bassi's drawing, the sellers are

evidently in a moment of rest, confirmed by the presence of a still sleeping member of their group (on the left) and the movements of another, in the act of putting on his shoes.

#### 4 The Educational System at the Accademia Clementina

An analysis of Bassi's four drawings makes it possible to reconstruct not only the key moments of his education at the Academy but they also provide a window onto the educational methods of academies in general. However, not all academies employed the same pedagogy. For example, it is known that the *Accademia dei Pensieri* (Academy of Thoughts), founded by Felice Giani, first in Rome and, later, Bologna, held evening sessions where pupils were invited to exhibit original works on a specific theme and receive feedback from their peers (Leone 2009, 26-9). The Accademia Clementina, where students studied and

developed their technique by imitating the etchings of the old masters, clearly employed a different approach. A further example is provided by the experience of the young winners of the *Grand Prix de Peinture de Paysage Historique* (Grand Prize for Historical Landscape Painting). The winners of this prize, established in Paris in 1816 and carried out at the *Académie de France* in Rome beginning in 1817, were required to complete various trips to the Roman countryside, southern Italy and even Greece and the Middle East, during which they documented their travels through drawings. These drawings formed the basis of

<sup>21</sup> Sapori 2015, 154, fig. repr. (in colour). In the Eighteenth century, many editions of this series appeared in Rome (1740, 1766, 1776); a sign of its success, a century later. Cf. Marabottini 1966, V, VII, XIV-XV, fmn. 8, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bertarelli 1940, 69, no. 360; Vianelli 1969, 38-9 (no. 4), 100-1 (no. 35).

paintings completed in studios of the Academy and later displayed at Parisian *Salons* as annual testaments to the pupils' development. Only at the completion of the fourth year were students required to complete a *paysage historique* (historical landscape), an invented landscape with a Greek mythological theme (Bonfait 2003; Mentasti 2015, 56). Martinelli's students, on the other hand, were required to follow an opposite course of study, producing various invented scenes as final exams throughout their course of study such as the idealised view of the Roman Forum and the Cini drawing and, at the conclusion of their time at the Academy, a work done completely on site or at least based on drawings made on site at a real location, as evidenced by Bassi's drawings of Massa Lombarda and the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Saint Luke. This view marks an important milestone in the young artist's career, the end of his time as Martinelli's pupil at the Academy. In fact, at the end of 1802, the young Bassi began studying architecture. This change in focus is clarified by an annotation found in the previously mentioned *Note de' Giovani* written by Martinelli ([1803?], 22). On November 8th 1802 the name *Gio Batta Bassi di Massa Lombarda* appears amongst the list of pupils of the architect, Angelo Venturoli (1749-1821). It is probable that Martinelli, Secretary of the Academy, retired due to his advanced age and his dislike of the newly constituted Accademia di Belle Arti (Fine Arts Academy) (Zamboni 1979, 218).<sup>23</sup> Bassi likely studied under Venturoli

until 1808, when, in March, he was given the possibility to study in Rome for three years, thanks to funds provided by Massa Lombarda's *Opera Pia Rustici*, a religious organisation; Bassi decided, however, to complete the three years of study in only one year, likely for economic reasons (Nicosia 1985, 69, 97). Bassi embarked for Rome together with Giovanni Monti (1765-1825). It is likely that Rodolfo Fantuzzi (1779-1825) was also part of the group (Ridolfi 2009, 122-9). Bassi's first stay in Rome is registered by the abbot Giuseppe Antonio Guattani in his *Catalogo degli artisti* (Catalogue of artists) which was, in all effects, the first appearance of Bassi's name in a Roman publication (Guattani 1809, 144).<sup>24</sup> At the conclusion of his brief stay in Rome, Bassi returned to Bologna and stayed there from April 1809 to November 1810 when he was once again able to visit Rome, thanks to a four-year architectural fellowship awarded to him by the Bolognese academy (Quadri 1989, 63). It would only be at the end of his four-year fellowship, in 1814, that Bassi would finally be able to dedicate himself fully to landscape painting quickly becoming

eccellente pittor paesista, e riputato dei migliori che vivano, e molto ma molto innanzi nella via di Claudio.

an excellent landscape painter, considered one of the best living artists of this genre, and far along the path of Claudio Lorrain. (Nicolai 1851, 5-6)<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> His role as secretary is confirmed by the presence of a large number of documents held by the *Archivio dell'Accademia Clementina* (Accademia Clementina Archive), written by Martinelli. The writing of such documents was indeed among the responsibilities of a secretary of the new Academies of the *Regno Italico* (Kingdom of Italy) (Milan, Bologna). See "Statuti e piano disciplinare per le Accademie nazionali di Belle Arti approvate con Decreto del Vice Presidente, I settembre 1803 anno II" 1803, 269-70.

<sup>24</sup> Bassi is included among other pupils of the academies of the Regno Italico, that would have included, from 1807, the Academy of Venice.

<sup>25</sup> Letter dated January the 28th 1813 sent from Bologna by Pietro Giordani to Lazzaro Papi.

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