

CHAPTER TWO



Francesco Mochi



STONE AND SCALE

Michael Cole

Having finished the Orvieto works, [Mochi] returned from there to Rome, just as Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who later became pope, was making his chapel, the first on the left of the entrance in the church of S. Andrea della Valle. To render it elegant and rich throughout, and to see that it had all the requisites of beauty, [the cardinal] took care to adorn it both with paintings and with sculpture, and he had the great genius to avail himself of artists from his homeland, he being Florentine. Getting wind of Francesco Mochi, he assigned the artist one of the four statues that are paired in the lateral niches, namely the figure of Saint Martha, which is larger than life-size. Thus Mochi set himself to the capricious purpose of giving majesty and greatness to that figure, the niche not being very large since the site would not allow it, nor the disposition of the space.¹

IN WHAT WAS LIKELY THE FIRST CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF FRANCESCO Mochi's sculpture, Giovanni Battista Passeri drew attention to what he called the artist's *capriccioso partito*. Yet the caprice in the *Saint Martha* (figs. 2.1 and 2.2) Mochi began carving around 1609 for the Barberini Chapel did not depend on fanciful invention or humorous subject matter. Rather, it had to do with the way that the sculptor thought about the scale of his works. Since the niche did not permit Mochi to carve a physically enormous sculpture, Passeri suggests, the artist used his wit to "give the figure greatness" ("per dare grandezza a quella figura").²

Scale—that is, relative size—in fact comes up repeatedly in these initial lines on the chapel, and Passeri distinguishes two common ways that viewers from the period measured it. When he refers to "la Figura di Santa Marta, che è maggiore del naturale,"



D · O · M
DEI PARAL IN CAELVM ASCEN-
DIT MAPHAEVS SRE CARD BARRI-
SIGNIVS PRAEFOTVS
SACELIVM
EX SVPREMA PATRVIVS SENTENTIA
ORNAVIT ET D
ANNO DOMINICI 1571



2.1 (opposite) · South side wall of the Barberini Chapel, S. Andrea delle Valle, Rome, with Ambrogio Bonvicino's *Saint John the Evangelist* and Francesco Mochi's *Saint Martha*

2.2 · Francesco Mochi, *Saint Martha*

2.3 · Marcantonio Raimondi, *Saint Martha*

Passeri describes the size not of the object Mochi carved but of the character he carved in it. Size in this case pertained to the depiction: comparing Mochi's represented human body to a human one would expect to encounter on the street, the statue looked big. When, by contrast, he commented that Mochi took the approach he did because "la nicchia non è molto grande," Passeri drew attention to the physical conditions of the



D · O · M
FRANCISCO BARBERINOVS REFERENT
VII VIRO PROTONOTARIO
ANIMI PATERNI PATRVO
SIBI ET GENTILIBVS
MAPHAEVVS SRE CARD BARBERINVS
SIGN IVST PRAEFECTVS
SEPVL CRVMP



sculptor's work. This variety of size might have consequences for subject matter, but it did not start with that. Scale here responded to a limit condition, the quantity of marble that could reasonably go into a predetermined space. When Passeri writes that the sculptor had to compensate for the niche by "giving the figure greatness," he suggests that from this perspective, Mochi's sculpture looked small.

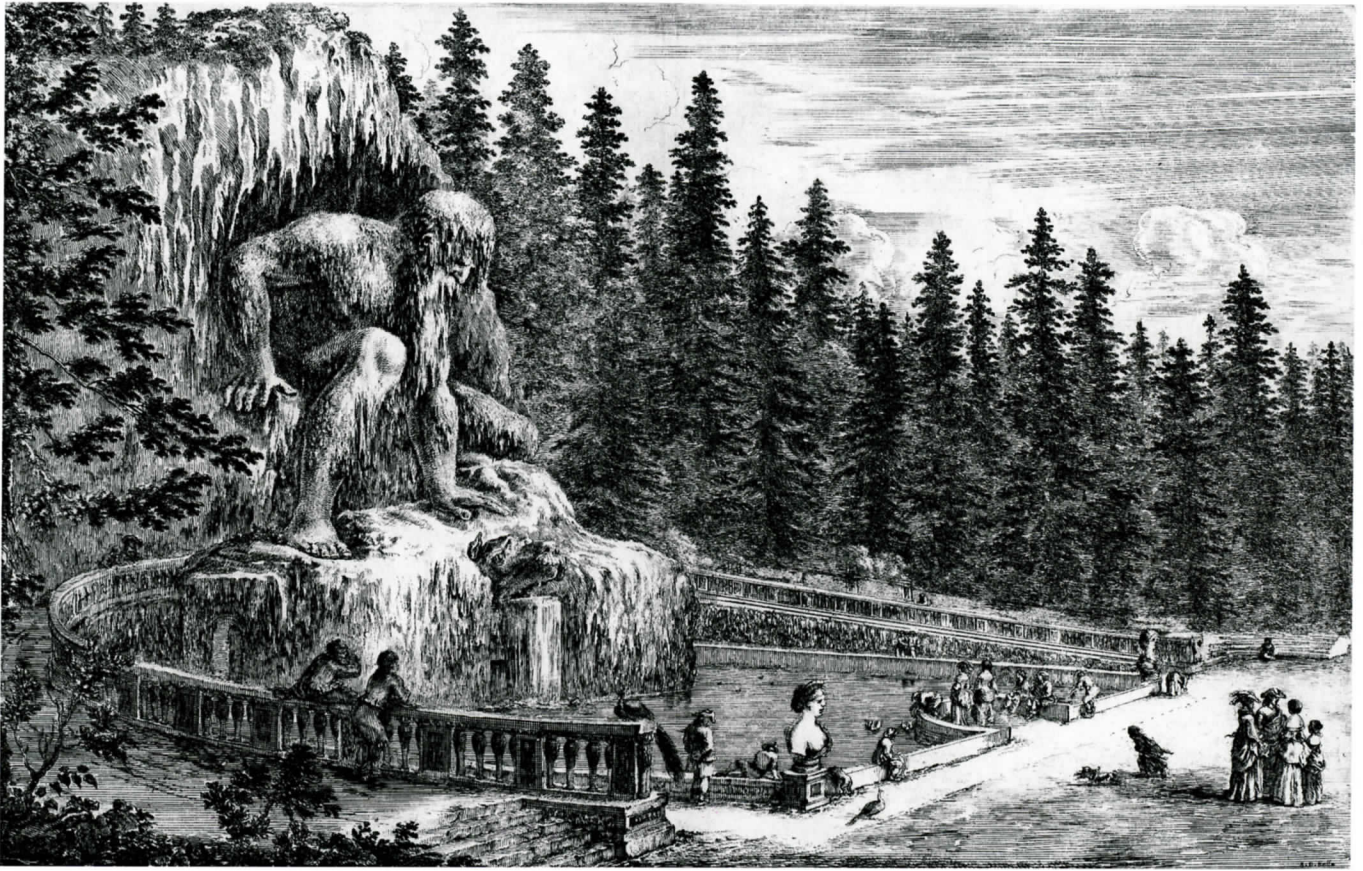
Saint Martha was not a common sculptural subject, but Mochi outfitted her much as Marcantonio Raimondi had in an engraving one century earlier (fig. 2.3), showing her robed and veiled, holding an aspergillum and vase as attributes, accompanied by the dragon she overpowered with holy water before binding it with her girdle.³ Where Mochi's arrangement differed most dramatically from Marcantonio's was in its compacting of the composition. Martha is no longer vertical but half-kneeling, bending forward. In her left hand she no longer holds the vase, which now rests on the ground, but rather a gathering of her garment, pulling the rest of it tight around her. Her right arm reaches down to wet the miraculous instrument that enabled her victory.

Pietro Bernini, Ambrogio Bonvicino, and Cristoforo Stati, likewise commissioned by Maffeo Barberini to carve statues for the lower zone of the chapel, similarly delivered blocks that were nearly as high as the niches that were to contain them (fig. 2.4).⁴ Mochi was the only sculptor involved with the project, however, to place his figure in something other than a seated pose. In the alternative he adopted, the motivation of the figure's act is twofold, internal and external: Martha leans downward because that is where her vase is, but she also bends so as to fit into her allotted space. Or at least so it appears: we might well ask whether Passeri's perception that Mochi's niche was small—something he does not write with regard to the others, though they were the same size—was really an objective condition of the chapel as opposed to an effect of Mochi's invention. The niche measures nearly eight feet from bottom to top; if it *looked* modest to Passeri, that was in part because it seemed hardly to be able to contain what Mochi carved.

The invention, in this case, treated the architectural setting as a constraint. The productive tension Mochi discovered, however, operated not only between object and site but also between design and stone. Mochi's depicted character is perhaps nine feet in height, considerably taller not only than the niche but also than the block Mochi worked. And seventeenth-century viewers liked to mentally extend figures in just this way: Filippo Baldinucci, for example, described Giambologna's *Appenine* (fig. 2.5) as "a great giant in the act of sitting," then went on to remark that "if this figure were standing, it would rise fifty *braccia*."⁵ The sculptor Giovanni Francesco Susini, making studies of Michelangelo's New Sacristy sculptures in the very years the Barberini marbles were under way, drew versions of what his predecessor's compositions would look like if they unfolded themselves, then wrote measurements onto those drawings (fig. 2.6).⁶

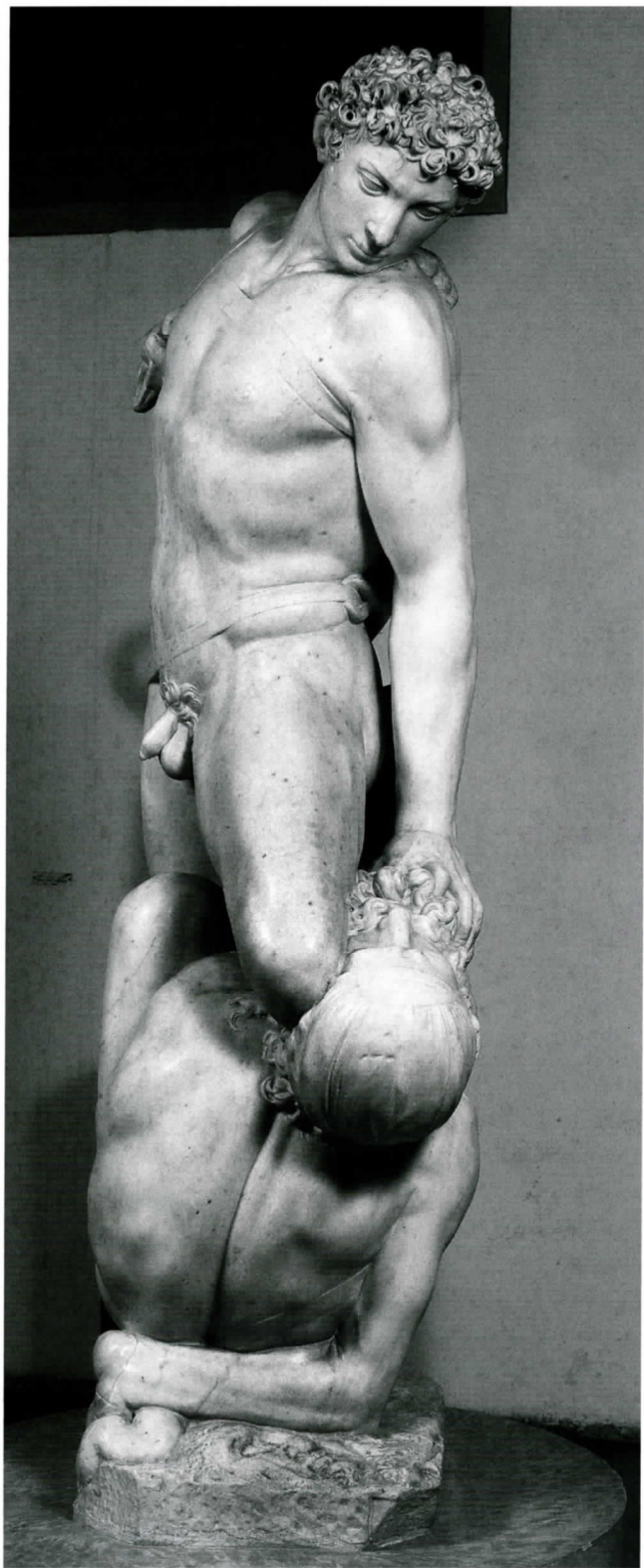
One model for such thinking came from antiquity: Strabo had described the cult statue made by Phidias for the Temple of Zeus in Athens as being "so large that, although the temple was very large, the artist is thought to have missed the proper symmetry, for he showed Zeus seated but almost touching the roof with his head, thus making the impression that if Zeus arose and stood erect he would unroof the temple,"

2.4 · North side wall of the Barberini Chapel, S. Andrea delle Valle, Rome, with Cristoforo Stati's *Mary Magdalene* and Pietro Bernini's *John the Baptist*



2.5 · Stefano della Bella, view of
Giambologna's *Appennine*

going on to say that Callimachus had set forth the measures of the statue in an iambic poem.⁷ Prints like those by Philips Galle (1572) and Antonio Tempesta (1608) imagined the disproportion of Phidias's figure and building. In the fifteenth century, Alberti had provided a different perspective on scale, describing the sculptor's material as a kind of limit.⁸ And the drawings that early modern sculptors very occasionally produced for prospective works in marble show what this understanding of materials could mean in practice. In a sketched idea for the Neptune fountain in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, for example, one draftsman (fig. 2.7) envisioned a central figure on an elevated platform, right arm raised above his head, left leg bent at the knee. Around the entire figure he drew a continuous, light, curving contour line in black chalk: what is this? It seems unlikely to be a drapery, which would be odd in a statue of Neptune, and it cannot be a niche. Presumably it indicates the shape of the block that confronted the sculptor, either as that block arrived from the quarry or after a preliminary roughing out—a possibility that is not easy to reconcile with Detlef Heikamp's provocative speculation, in the catalogue to the 2011 Bartolomeo Ammanati exhibition in Florence, about how a series of designs would have related to the given block's form.⁹ Whatever



original dimensions of the stone that had come from the quarry. Honor's head corresponds to what would have been the maximum height of the vertical block; the same figure's right breast must be near to one of the block's former long surfaces, the right arm aligned with the surface that ran perpendicular to this. Deceit's body seems not only suppressed by the figure standing over him but also compressed by invisible envelopes at its sides, and his right hand in particular presses out, mimelike, against an imaginary plane.¹² The single distinctive attribute identifying the characters is the winding ribbon that not only imprisons the figure on the bottom but also wraps the one on top, binding him no less forcefully than his ostensible captive.

One could take this band as a sign of triumph, an indication that Honor has conquered and enchained Deceit. One could equally see precisely the opposite, a warning that Honor must escape Deceit's snare. As a motif of marble, however, the band reads not only as an attribute characterizing the figure but also as a substitute for the confines of the now missing block. It marks the extremities of the composition it surrounds even as the contortion it fictively effects alerts the viewer to the missing material it replaces. Scholars have long treated Danti as an entranced follower of Michelangelo, and there can be little doubt that he knew the opening lines of Michelangelo's most famous poem:

Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto
c'un marmo solo in sé non circonda
col suo superchio, e solo a quello arriva
la man che ubbidisce all'intelletto.

The greatest artist does not have any concept that a single piece of marble does not circumscribe within its superfluity, and only a hand that obeys the intellect attains this.¹³

These are, of course, the lines that commentators have most frequently connected to Michelangelo's own thoughts on the problem of designing within the single marble block. Not surprisingly, discussions have concentrated primarily on Michelangelo's term *concetto* (concept, conceit), and on the awkward relationship it implies between the idea in the artist's head and the hard, intractable thing before him. What merits equal attention, however, is the other key term in the poem's opening lines, one emphasized, like *concetto*, through end rhyme: "The

greatest artist has no *concetto*,” Michelangelo writes, “that a single marble does not circumscribe.”¹⁴

What Mochi’s sculpture for the Barberini Chapel has in common with Danti’s allegory is that both depend, more or less directly, on a group of Michelangelo’s early sixteenth-century inventions—the *Prisoners*, the *Victory*, the *Times of Day*—all of which are posed so as to create the illusion that the artist worked on a larger scale than his materials allowed, and all of which take up subjects that draw attention to this very strategy. By the time Mochi set his own hand to marble, poses like the one he gave his *Martha* had become a kind of “visual topos,” a sculptural commonplace, the meaning of which was discernible as much across a series of statues as within a single one.¹⁵ In sculpture, and especially in marble sculpture, that topos played on the fiction that the figure could grow larger by straightening itself. This, in turn, depended on a sense of the nonidentity between the size of the figure and that of the block, a generative friction between an aesthetic that encouraged sculptors to conceive works on the largest possible scale and the real means those sculptors had available to make their objects—namely, the often short, narrow slabs that came in from the quarries.

When a sculptor conceived a composition for a niche, finally, this second shell only amplified the dynamic of struggle that, in a workshop setting, might primarily have seemed to operate between figure and block. As Francesco Benelli, writing on the history of the *colonna alveolata*, has shown, the form of the niche could echo the excavation in the quarry wall that resulted from the liberation of blocks for columns and statues.¹⁶ A tight niche, similarly, could evoke the contours of the marble block that the sculptor cut away in making his figure. Michelangelo made the most of this when he placed his *Capitani* in frames that seem too narrow and too shallow. Danti presumably made his *Honor and Deceit* for a compact niche as well, and early depictions of Giambologna’s *Appenine* show that originally it did not crouch in the open air, but rather huddled in the niche-like mouth of an enormous grotto.¹⁷ If the arched form of the line around the central figure in the Neptune drawing suggests a niche as much as a block, this only points to the near coextension of those respective encasements.

All of these examples, of course, point especially to a Florentine mentality. It is no accident that Passeri, like many after him, perceived Mochi as the anachronistic embodiment of Mannerist Florence in Baroque Rome.¹⁸ Mochi’s themes in the *Martha*—one figure’s mastery of another, through an act of binding—tie it unmistakably to Florentine preoccupations, even as they distinguish the sculpture from the others in the chapel.



For Michelangelo, the idea of a nonalignment between the size of the figure and that of the block (and by extension, the niche) went hand in hand with the principle of the monolith, the expectation that the sculptor would carve the composition, however many bodies it comprised, from a single piece of stone (*un marmo solo*, in Michelangelo’s words).¹⁹ Heikamp reminds us that this principle was never inviolable—the hands of Ammanati’s Neptune were carved separately and joined to the core form. But

across Mochi's career, we see something different, this measure of skill actually losing its hold altogether in favor of competing interests. Various factors contributed to this. One was the increasing use of stucco to make decorations that looked to be of marble but that cost less and took less time to carry out. Mochi himself probably learned his craft from Camillo Mariani, whose spectacular colossal stucco figures for the niches of S. Bernardo alle Terme must have made an impression on everyone who saw them.²⁰ These same sculptures point to a second pressure on the principle of the monolith: the desire, especially in Rome, to make figures with dimensions that single blocks of stone just did not allow. Then there was the increasing separation of the roles of modeler and carver. Mochi's own father, Baldinucci tells us, made a career producing designs in wax and clay that others could translate into stone; such paths proved increasingly viable in and after the late sixteenth century.²¹ As the designer ceased to win credit for realizing a work without adding pieces, and the carver began receiving models that no single stone could contain, the sculpture *ex uno lapide* fell victim to a new professional configuration. Not to be overlooked, finally, is the loss of the authorities who had established such sculptures as paragons of virtuosity in the first place, as Michelangelo's example faded from view and as antiquarians increasingly realized that the ancients had abided by no such policy.

The shift in sensibilities can be tracked across Gianlorenzo Bernini's early works: the 1619 *Aeneas and Anchises* is essentially carved from a single block, the *David* of 1623–24 required significant joins, and—as Howard Hibbard long ago noted—the *Longinus* he began in 1629 no longer acknowledges any ideal of material integrity.²² No one captured the new mentality better, though, than Orfeo Boselli, whose *Osservazioni della scoltura antica* laid out revised guidelines for the moderns of his day. In a chapter entitled “How One Should Proceed with a Scarcity of Marble,” Boselli noted how even when a sculptor plans carefully,

the marble can snap or break in just those places where you need it, and you can find your measures fitting and want to realize them in the stone while knowing that in doing so you would make the stone too thin or find it impossible to do even that. In such cases, you should fill the empty spaces with gesso. . . . Nor does it bring less profit, when dealing with draped figures, to attach the head and the arms when these exceed ordinary size or when they widen the work too much, since you can hide under draperies those joins that cannot be disguised with stucco or some other artifice. This was common in antiquity. . . . In making heads I have squared the stone and when the marble was lacking in depth and overabundant in width, I have turned the face such that the superfluous width conceded me the depth that I lacked. . . . I have also seen faces added inside the hair, and hair placed on top of the head. . . . I am not writing this to provide an example for others. . . . I am merely reporting what I have seen among the ancients. Narratives and large statues can be made of multiple pieces, so long as the joins are always hidden inside draperies, clouds, architecture, or another thing that is fitting and sufficient to the need, as they are in the colossus of the Apostle Saint Andrew in

the Vatican—a work by the never sufficiently praised François Duquesnoy, the Fleming named by me in other places—and in the Saint Veronica by Mochi, the Saint Longinus, a work by the Cavalier Gianlorenzo Bernini, and in others that I don't remember.²³

In this passage, the only one in the entire treatise to mention Mochi, Boselli uses the Florentine to argue for what anyone trained in the last years of the sixteenth century would have regarded as the very opposite of the Florentine manner. Whereas sculptors in the tradition of Michelangelo had thought about the contours of the block as a boundary that ideally should not be trespassed, Boselli treats those contours as a consideration, but nothing more. Though he recounts how he himself took up devices like the one employed by Mochi in his *Martha* and by Danti in his *Honor and Deceit*, bending a head to stay within a given block's bounds, he does not present the choice as having been particularly virtuous: it was just one option among others. The lines immediately preceding this suggest that he could just as well have carved a separate head and attached it—or a hairpiece.

If the example of Michelangelo's marbles and the words of his poetry together suggested some basic directives for sculpture, Boselli here offers an alternative. And no sculptor illustrates better than Mochi the confrontation between these two attitudes in the years after 1600. Among his first independent commissions was the angel of the Annunciation he began carving for Orvieto Cathedral in 1603 (fig. 2.10).²⁴ The patrons of this seem not to have determined from the outset just where the sculpture was to be placed, though all must have known that it would be freestanding and that it would eventually interact with a sculpture of the Virgin across an open space.²⁵ The different orientations of the wings, torso, and head of Mochi's angel all anticipate an exposed setting and possibly even visibility from all sides. These conditions, along with the airy angelic subject, seem to have encouraged him to work against any evocation of the stone block.²⁶

Quite different was the situation Mochi confronted at S. Maria Maggiore in 1608. In March of that year, he began work on a *Saint Matthew and the Angel* for a niche high in one exterior façade of the Pauline Chapel (fig. 2.11). His material now was travertine, a more brittle stone than marble, and this, no less than the prospective setting, prevented him from giving his figure a pose like *Gabriel's*. Still, the pairing of the figure with Francesco Caporale's *Saint Matthias* on the same façade demonstrates that Mochi did have choices available; this is the first sculpture to show his distinctive thinking about the compositional relevance of the niche. While the *Matthias* steps forward and addresses the viewer in the piazza below, the *Matthew* casts a sidelong gaze and seems almost to squat.²⁷ Caporale's statue interacts with the spectator, Mochi's with the frame. The sense here that the artist might privilege the setting of the sculpture over the space it addresses introduces priorities that would guide Mochi's work at S. Andrea della Valle as well.

The *Matthew* was satisfactory enough that Mochi's patrons asked him to make further small works for the interior of the chapel, and later, to finish a figure that his master Mariani left incomplete upon his death in 1611. But the *Gabriel* had made an impression



2.9 · Francesco Mochi,
Annunciate Virgin



2.10 · Francesco Mochi, *Angel of
the Annunciation*

as well, and while Mochi was carving the evangelist, the overseers of Orvieto Cathedral were having him work on the *Annunciate Virgin* that was to be its pendant (fig. 2.9). His employers also made it clear from early on that Mochi would be paid less for this sculpture than he had received for its partner, a consideration that may have encouraged him to adopt a simpler form.²⁸ Nevertheless, the sculpture was to be a watershed work for Mochi, the first to draw attention to the fact that it is carved from a single piece of marble. The figure pulls the chair off its back legs so that the seat and back cant forward (fig. 2.12); Mary herself hunches slightly, and she wraps her cloak tightly around her body. Decorum would have limited Mochi's options here—he could hardly have made the Virgin stoop much farther forward, and an expansive composition of the sort he had favored with the *Gabriel* might have seemed to undermine the character's necessary humility.²⁹ Still, the statue invites the viewer to imagine an alternative state of relaxation in which the composition would expand, the chair pulling the right hand

2.11 · West exterior façade of the Pauline Chapel, with Francesco Mochi's *Saint Matthew* and Francesco Caporale's *Saint Matthias*, S. Maria Maggiore, Rome



2.12 · Francesco Mochi,
Annunciate Virgin (second view)

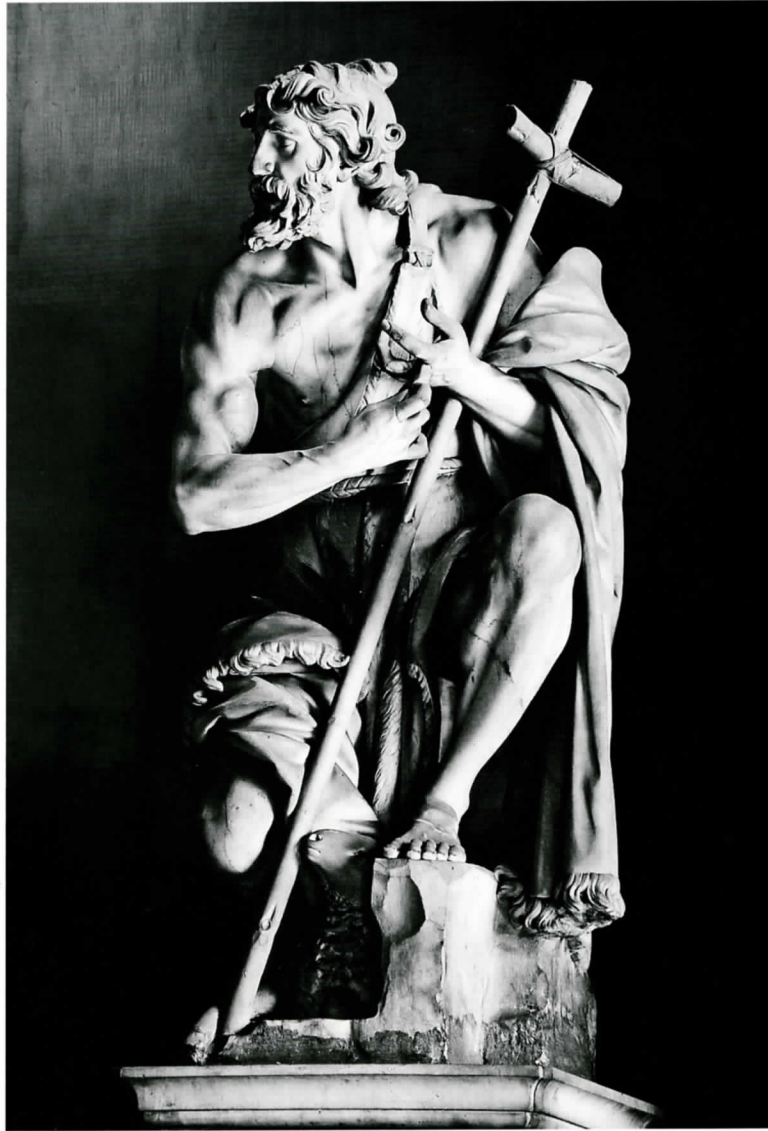


and arm outward, the left arm unlocking, the head and torso rising. And the fact that it is done in marble gives the compression a sense that it would not have had in stucco or bronze. The viewer need only imagine a contour like the one the *Neptune* draftsman drew about his design to envision the block that once circumscribed the pose.

Size must have been a consideration for Mochi with each member of the pair. The contract for the *Gabriel* had called for a “statua del naturale”—a life-size statue—and the artist complied, producing a work on the measure of the beholder’s own body.³⁰ The overall figure might be significantly wider or taller than any of the individual pieces the

sculptor used to make it—especially from the front, we can't really tell. With the *Annunciate Virgin*, on the other hand, the scale is as much internal as external; though Mochi's patrons had the blocks for both sculptures quarried at the same time, presumably with the intention of having similar figures, his *Virgin* is larger than life-size, scaled to the block itself rather than to nature.³¹ It is a composition that invites viewers to remark the sculptor's self-imposed controls, the places where, by converting one dimension into another, he managed to make the figure taller, or wider, than the object itself. As we have seen, such an approach lent itself especially well to statues made for niches, and it is the one Mochi adopted when he received the marble for the *Martha* in July of 1609, the year after completing the *Virgin*. The risk with such a conception, as the *Martha* would also show, was that it could make the statue seem indifferent to those to which it was expected to be related. When the cathedral initially hired Mochi to make a Saint Philip, the contract made a point of requiring him to design an apostle "on the measure of the others in the church." The explicit instructions to make this conform with figures in a series draws attention to what Mochi did not do with the *Virgin* he added to his *Gabriel*, with the *Martha*, or with his S. Maria Maggiore sculpture. And when, in 1609, he came around to making the *Philip*, both he and his employers seem to have forgotten about the original instructions for that sculpture as well. Today, as in the seventeenth century, the statue stands next to Giambologna's *Saint Matthew*, which looks diminutive by comparison.³²

Beginning in 1612, Mochi was in Piacenza, where he carried out a pair of equestrian monuments. Only seventeen years later did Mochi return to Rome and to the problem of making marble statues for niches. In 1629 he began carving a *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 2.13), according to Passeri to replace Pietro Bernini's version of the same subject already *in situ* (fig. 2.4). The commission suggests that the eccentric *Martha*, two decades later, still held appeal, and indeed, Mochi's invention for the new statue returned to the hallmarks of his earlier work. This *Baptist* is closer in pose than was the *Martha* to the other marbles in the chapel, but the similarity only amplifies the difference in the figure's scale, relative both to Bernini's earlier carving and to the niche. Bernini's *Baptist* perches more than he sits on his rock; with his right leg fully extended,



2.13 · Francesco Mochi, *John the Baptist*, Hofkirche, Dresden

he appears almost at his full height. In Mochi's composition, by contrast, both the rotation of the left knee to the edge of the block and the tucking of the left lower leg and foot back out of view indicate a considerably taller man—one as tall, in fact, as the *Martha*.³³ Passeri reports that the pope had ordered the statue to be placed in the niche when Gianlorenzo Bernini intervened, preventing the installation with the insistence that the substitution would disgrace his family name.³⁴ Whether or not this story is true, one can easily imagine how irregular the statue would have made the chapel's overall program seem. In the current configuration, the *Martha* is a curiosity, an invention that seems to come from a different place than its neighbors. The *Baptist* would have split the sequence and forced more direct comparison, generating the impression that the depicted bodies had come from two different worldly races, requiring viewers to ask which conception of seated figure in niche was right.

The year after he carved the *Baptist*, Mochi began work on the statue for which he would ultimately be most famous, or notorious, the *Veronica* in the Crossing of Saint Peter's (fig. 2.14). Never before had Mochi had to carry out such a large figure in stone, though in many ways he must have found the conditions familiar: as at S. Andrea della Valle and at S. Maria Maggiore, he was making a figure for a niche, part of a series that would involve three other sculptors. Bernini, the designer of the *Longinus* and overseer of the ensemble, established the basic parameters of the assignment: all four sculptors involved must have been given target heights for their figures, for in all four of the completed statues at least one shoulder aligns roughly with the molding that marks the transition to the conch, and the gilded stucco roundel in the colored marble wall behind reads as a kind of halo (fig. 2.15).³⁵ Yet once again, Mochi found a way to scale his *Veronica* differently than his rivals. Her shoulder and head only align with the same architectural features as the other statues because she, unlike her three counterparts, has leaned over. If she were to adopt the pose of any other figure from the crossing, she would tower over it.³⁶ It is as though Veronica has bent over to *reduce* herself to the proper height.

Some of the writers who responded to the work at its unveiling drew attention to its size: Vincenzo Maria Savarelli, for example, referred to the marble as the “idol of the giants.”³⁷ Yet Boselli, as we have seen, admired Mochi's figure because the sculptor succeeded in using multiple pieces and hiding the joins, and Passeri made a related point: Mochi, he wrote, “worked that marble with supreme artifice and effort . . . and even though it is made of multiple joined pieces, he doesn't allow one to discern where those pieces are connected, showing that he knew how to hide art with art.”³⁸ Though in fact not a monolith, Passeri suggests, the *Veronica* looked like one—initially, he even refers to Mochi carving what sounds like a single block (*quel marmo*). Mochi's coordination of size and scale, in this case, played into the impression that a single stone had established the contours his design ultimately respected.³⁹

Mochi's early *Gabriel* alerts us that well before Bernini's arrival on the scene, he was content to work against the image and measure of the single block when the subject matter or the architectural context called for it, and Maddalena De Luca Savelli, for one, has seen in the *Veronica* precisely a return to that youthful approach, “defying the



compact material by drawing it out into thin, curving draperies, suspended from the base by the impact of air.⁴⁰ One might just as easily argue, however, that the *Veronica* asserts its compactness: the scale of the building prevented Mochi from undertaking a monolith in the Florentine manner, yet tasked to make a sculpture for a niche, Mochi continued to present the constraint. Or perhaps we should say that in 1630, Mochi and Bernini had arrived at competing conceptions of scale. Bernini's sculptures, and indeed his guiding vision for the crossing of Saint Peter's, pushed the idea of the *maggiore del naturale* to its extreme, even when that required sculptors to make figures of stacked up blocks.⁴¹ Mochi continued to scale his figure against its container, and consequently to produce a work that could outscale those of rivals.

The *Veronica* appears to be the last sculpture Mochi planned in conjunction with a niche. From 1631, the overseers of Orvieto Cathedral were attempting to get Mochi to carve them another figure; he began a *Thaddeus* in 1640 and finally delivered it in 1644

2.14 · Francesco Mochi,
Veronica, Saint Peter's, Rome

2.15 · Gianlorenzo Bernini,
Longinus, Saint Peter's, Rome

2.16 · Francesco Mochi, *Baptism of Christ*, Palazzo Braschi, Rome

2.17 (*opposite*) · Francesco Mochi, *Saint Paul*, Palazzo Braschi, Rome



(fig. 3.3). The beautiful statue shows no hint of constraint; arm, head, book, and foot all project confidently, and the sculptor makes no attempt to “hide art with art,” disguising joins. In the sad *Baptism* group (fig. 2.16) Mochi may have been carving in the same years, an awkwardly slender and fragile Christ bows deeply, but this merely conforms to a narrative requirement. Nothing in the multipiece statue hints at a figure limited by the confines of a block or niche, and the left leg suggests precisely the opposite, a passage where the sculptor would have cut away *more* stone had that been possible. Whereas Mochi’s earlier sculptures could be admired for seeming too big, the Baptist, despite his added arm, is not tall enough to do his job; whoever installed it on its current pedestal had to add a booster slab beneath his feet.⁴²

Among Mochi's last works was a *Saint Paul* (fig. 2.17), made in conjunction with a pendant *Saint Peter* to stand on the stair flanking the monumental ciborium in the Roman church of S. Paolo fuori le mura. Passeri believed Mochi left the towering work incomplete at his death, an impression encouraged by the numerous evident struts, and surely some passages could have been cut down further, notably around the hilt of Paul's sword. The right arm raises questions, however, for had Mochi in fact cut away the brace that supports it, the tensile strength of the stone would not have proved sufficient and the appendage would have broken off. It is difficult not to conclude, that is, that Mochi *wanted* to leave at least one strut in evidence—otherwise, he would simply have carved the arm as a separate piece and attached it, as he did the arms of both Christ and the Baptist in that contemporary group.⁴³ If this is correct, it would mean that Mochi, in one of his final efforts, wished to leave a work sufficiently unfinished so that all would see what he had been given to carve. Scaled to Bernini's Rome, the statue would nevertheless have been at home in the world of Michelangelo a century before.

Passeri understood the *Paul*—by contrast to the *Baptism*—to have been a failure, disliked by the abbot who had commissioned it.⁴⁴ And it is tempting to ask, consequently, whether the problem was Mochi's inability to live up to the challenge presented by the stone, or whether it was rather the outmoded nature of the challenge itself. Having received for the last time a block that was large enough and a commission iconic enough to let him scale the figure to the stone, he asked to be measured by the wrong rule.

NOTES

1. Passeri, *Künstlerbiographien*, 132:

Finiti li lavori d'Orvieto se ne ritornò in Roma, et appunto il Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, che fù doppo Pontifice, faceva la sua Cappella nella Chiesa di Santo Andrea della Valle, et è la prima a sinistra



dell'ingresso. Per renderla del tutto compita, e ricca, e perche avesse tutti li requisiti di bellezza, procurava d'adornarla di pittura, e di scultura; ma haveva gran genio di valersi d'Artefici della sua Patria; essendo egli Fiorentino. Sentendo l'aura di Francesco Mochi gli diede a fare una delle quattro Statue, che sono nelle nicchie laterali due per parte, et è la Figura di Santa Marta, che è maggiore del naturale. Prese il Mochi un capriccioso partito, per dare a quella, maestà, e grandezza; esendo che la nicchia non è molto grande, non comportandolo il sito, nè il compartimento del tutto.

2. In early modern Italian, *grandezza* can simply mean “size”: Vasari uses it frequently this way, referring, e.g., to “una figura di grandezza di mezzo braccio.” Given the context, however, I have followed the standard, less neutral translation in Alfred A. Hoare’s *Short Italian Dictionary*.

3. For the narrative, see *Golden Legend*, 392.

4. The essential study of the chapel is Schütze, *Kardinal Maffeo Barberini*, 31–146.

5. Baldinucci, *Notizie*, 2:566: “E questi un gran gigante in atto di sedere . . . e basti il dire, che se questa figura fosse in piedi, alzerebbe cinquanta braccia.”

6. See the discussion in Cole, *Ambitious Form*, esp. 179–83.

7. Strabo, *Geography* 8.3.30.

8. In *De statua*, Alberti writes that if you possess the *dimensio* and *finitio*, “from any given example you will be able to record, not only by drawing but also in words and figures, the direction of the lines, the extent of the surfaces and position of the parts, so that you will have no doubt of your ability to make something like it of the same size or smaller or a hundred cubits large, or even, I would say, as big as Mount Caucasus, provided that material we use were sufficient for such an enormous undertaking.” See Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture*, 125.

9. See Heikamp, “La Fontana del Nettuno,” 224–25. Note that in several of Heikamp’s reconstructions, the imaginary block has no relation to the figures it contains.

10. Heikamp’s entry gives serious consideration to the possibility that Giovanni Vittorio Soderini was responsible for the sheet, though it also notes that the work had previously been ascribed to Bartolomeo Ammanati, Vincenzo Danti, Giambologna, and the school of Michelangelo, and it ultimately catalogues the sheet as “anonymous.” The wall label—presumably written with Heikamp’s entry in hand—assigned the drawing without explanation to Baccio Bandinelli. See Paolozzi Strozzi and Zikos, *L’Acqua*, 424–27.

11. Borghini, *Il riposo*, 593: “Ma perche il marmo gli riuscì stretto nelle spalle non potè egli sicome disideraua far mostrare alla sua figura attitudine con le braccia alzata; ma fu costretto à farla con gran difficoltà, come hoggi si vede” (emphasis mine).

12. Modern scholars have repeatedly noted the degree to which Danti’s carving seems designed to make the viewer aware of confines that are no longer visible. David Summers remarks that Danti “maintained, exploited, and perhaps even exaggerated” the strictures of the shaft of marble; Joachim Poeschke comments that “the movements of the two figures are restricted by the limitations of the block on every side, so that they seem unduly compressed.” See Summers, *Sculpture of Vincenzo Danti*, 143, and Poeschke, *Michelangelo*.

13. Translation modified from Ryan (Buonarroti, *Poems*). The poem would have been well known in Florence in the 1560s, for Benedetto Varchi had published a commentary on it.

14. Modern translations do not, on the whole, attempt to preserve this term with a cognate: Ryan (in Buonarroti, *Poems*), for examples, renders *circonscriva* as “contain.”

15. See Pfisterer and Seidel, *Visuelle Topoi*.

16. See Benelli, “Variò tanto della commune usanza degli altri,” esp. 74–75.

17. For other images of the *Appenine* in its earlier architectural setting, see Vezzosi, *L’Appennino del Giambologna*.

18. For a recent reading of Mochi’s *Saint Veronica* (discussed below) that, like Passeri’s biography, emphasizes the artist’s “fiorentinità,” see Lingo, “Mochi’s Edge.” Other thoughtful discussions of the topic include Hess, “Nuovi aspetti,” and Siemer, “Francesco Mochi,” esp. 408–27.

19. For this topic, see Lavin, “*Ex Uno Lapide*,” with further references.

20. Baldinucci, *Notizie*, 3:631, writes that Mochi was Mariani’s only student, and Passeri, *Künstlerbiographien*, 131, reports specifically that it was Mariani who taught Mochi to carve. Siemer, “Francesco Mochi,” 31, proposes that Mochi would have worked with Mariani in S. Bernardo.

21. See Baldinucci, *Notizie*, 4:423–25. The rise of the professional modeler is a central topic in Cole, *Ambitious Form*; see especially chapter 1.

22. See the discussion in Cole, “Bernini Struts,” which is in turn heavily dependent on Coliva’s important *Bernini scultore*.

23. Boselli, *Osservazioni*, 67v–68v:

Come si deue procedere nella scarsezza de marmi.
Cap[itolo] XXVI / Perche nel fare i piani da prender le misure aggiustate in tanti modi quanto si è detto, possono i marmi essere schiantati, et rotti notabilmente, in quelli lochi doue apunto è il bisogno, essendoui per altro la misura conueniente, et uolendo nella pietra trouarli, o si assotigliarebbe troppo il sasso, o sarebbe impossibile a farlo: in tal caso si riempie con gesso i luoghi uacui et si fanno le riquadrature, et piani riportati così si procede con regola, et li piani si fanno, et la materia conseruandosi

serue al bisogno. Grande aiuto ancò si dà ai marmi con le pendenze di essi, poscia che una figura la quale per l'atto si butta auanti, uolendola cauare da un sasso quadrato troppa materia andarebbe a male, e 'si spenderebbe assai senza profitto, quindi è che alla pendenza bisogna ricorrere, quale si fà piu, e meno, secondo il bisogno con leuar sotto la base la pietra tanto, et da quella parte, la quale concede l'effetto. Già sò che alcuno dira si calza sotto con legni, e cosi si fà pendere doue bisogni; a me non piace tal modo, ne si troua nelle bone statue antiche, le quali sempre hanno la base acomodata con la figura. Et sopra che piano le situate subito fanno il loro effetto naturalmente, o con poca cosa si remediano: perche lo statue sono comprese fra li mobili, e non fra i stabili. Considerando questo, punto gli antichi maestri del mondo, et giudicarono che non sempre loro poteuano essere a piombar bene l'opere delle lor mani, onde era di necessità far le basi bene al possibile. Ne è di minor profitto, in figure uestite riportar testa, et bracci, quando escono dal ordinaria grandezza, et che slarghino oltre modo; potendosi sotto i panni nascondere le comissure, quali con stucho, o con altro artefitio non si possono celare: cio è usitato dal antico, et le statue trouate a Marino ultimamente de Signore Colonnesi sufficientemente lo prouano. Nel far teste hauendo io sasso riquadrato, et che la marmi sia scarsa in grossezza, et soprabonda in larghezza, fo suoltar la faccia tanto, che la larghezza souerchio mi concede la grossezza, che mi manca: e se defetta in larghezza gli angoli mese ne danno di uantaggio. Ho uisto ancora faccie riportate dentro capigliare, et capigliare sopra testa, ne sò per qual cagione: ma non scriuo questo per essemplio, ne per i mastri che han fatto come cosa degna d'imitatione: ma come uista nel antico. Historie et statue grandi si possono fare di più pezzi, ogni uolta che le comissure uengano occultate, dentro panni, nuuoli, architetture, o altra cosa accordata, et sufficiente al bisogno, come è il colosso del Apostolo Santo Andrea nel Vaticano, opera del non mai abbastanza laudato Francesco di Quesnoi fiamengo da me in altre lochi nominato: et la Santa Veronica del Mochi, et il San Longino opera del Cauallier Gio: Lorenzo Bernino; con altre, ch'io non mi ricordo. Tra colossi antichi di più pezzi fabricato è quello dinominato in Campidoglio, doue si uedeno piedi, mani, braccia, gambe riportate, confessando la mia ignoranza, che non intendo, ne come fossero occultate le comisure; ne come i pezzi stessero uniti insieme, non hauendo anima bastante a rattenerli; ne uedendosi indicazioni di perni, o spranghe. Douendo io fare il ritratto di Mario Frangipani, et hauendo un marmo grosso, ma non alto abbastanza, il quale per essere bianco et bono nel rimanente uoleuo seruirme, lo posai in modo, che un Angolo toccaua da basso, et per altro era il più alto del sasso,

et cosi truai il bisogno. E se sotto l'anima del petto dietro mancò un poco di pietra suplij con la cartella del peduccio et riuscì bene. Voglio dal fine a questo secondo libro nel quale uorrei hauer detto più fatti che parole, credendo non hauer lasciato cosa indietro da desiderarsi; e se qualche cosa mancasse si attrib[u]isca ad innauertenza, e non a difetto di uolontà.

24. He signed and dated the completed work in 1605. Unless otherwise noted, my dating of Mochi's works follows Savelli's (*Francesco Mochi*) still important 1981 entries.

25. A document from March 6, 1605, records the decision to place the finished work over a balustrade and, apparently at Mochi's suggestion, on a movable wooden socle. The idea may have been to facilitate repositioning if the initial placement proved unappealing. See Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 104, and for a more complete transcription, Favero, *Francesco Mochi*, 135. Favero, 30, and Cambareri, "Francesco Mochi's *Annunciation*," 3, also summarize the subsequent discussion relating to the statue's eventual relocation, motivated in part because the placement on the balustrade came to look precarious. Cambareri publishes an eighteenth-century print, and Fumi, *Il Duomo di Orvieto* reproduces a nineteenth-century photograph, both of which show the statues' subsequent installation.

26. It appears to me that the angel's left arm is monolithic, while the right forearm is attached. The extended index finger on the left hand is also a separate piece; Siemer, "Francesco Mochi," 69, writes that this was broken off and then reattached, though the fissure may also indicate the limit of the original block. The profile of the block Mochi was given to work is best imagined when viewing the figure from its right side, a perspective Mochi did not intend his viewers to have.

27. The antithesis between Mochi's approach and that of Caporale ultimately divides the whole sequence of figures along the wall. In Valsoldino's *Jerome and Luke*, on adjacent façades to the left of Mochi's *Matthew*, the fit between figure and niche is even more uncomfortable; Stefano Maderno, by contrast, continued Carporale's own, less conflictual practice to the right with his *Saint Epaphras*. My attributions here follow those documented in Dorati, "Gli scultori."

28. See the documents of August 28, 1608, in Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 106.

29. As it was, the bishop of Orvieto found cause to block the installation of the statue for three years. See the discussion in Fumi, *Il Duomo di Orvieto*, 318–19, Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 40, and Cambareri, "Francesco Mochi's *Annunciation*," 5.

30. See the document of April 10, 1603, in Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 102, and Favero, *Francesco Mochi*, 132–33: "l'intenda

conceduto di fare una statua del naturale, et insieme una Apostolo della misura dell'altri che sonno in chiesa."

31. The sculptor began the angel, like the Virgin, with a single block brought from Carrara. See the document of May 29, 1603, in Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 102, and Favero, *Francesco Mochi*, 133. Both blocks were ordered at the same time, but the overseers of the cathedral held off on commissioning the Virgin until they had seen how the angel turned out.

32. As noted above in note 25, a nineteenth-century photograph in Fumi (*Il Duomo di Orvieto*) shows the two statues positioned on pedestals before neighboring piers. The unequal size of the two works is all the more striking in light of the renewed agreement of May 26, 1609, which stipulated that Mochi was to receive for his work the "prezzo di scudi secento come ha hauto Giovan Bologna." See Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 107. Cambareri, "Francesco Mochi's *Annunciation*," 1, notes that the Giambologna *Matthew* was also the most recent apostle to have been carved for the series at the time he received his commission.

33. For the question of just what it is Mochi's *Baptist* is doing, see the discussion in Moser, "Poesie und Rhetorik."

34. D'Onofrio, *Roma vista*, 150–51n5, proposed that Mochi carved the statue for a completely different site, but Siemer, "Francesco Mochi," 167–69, makes a strong case for the truth of Passeri's report.

35. Boselli devotes a short chapter to statues in niches, writing, "Si regola l'altezza di una nicchia da farsi in proporzione di una data statua da situarsi senza piedestallo, con prendere la misura della sua altezza, et aggiungervi a questa tanti sestis di palmo di più di detta misura, il che sarà tutta l'altezza del vano della nicchia." In referring to the height of the "statua," he does not specify whether he has in mind the height of the object or of the figure—a distinction Mochi exploited. See Boselli, *Osservationi*, fol. 127.

36. Siemer, "Francesco Mochi," 52, notes that of the four statues, the *Veronica* occupied the most prestigious niche, to the left of the high altar.

37. See the poem anthologized in *La Veronica Vaticana*, 33.

38. Passeri, *Künstlerbiographien*, 134: "ha lavorato quel marmo con sommo arteficio e fatica . . . e benche di più pezzi congiunti, non lascia penetrare il luoco ove insieme siano collegati quanto ha saputo schermire l'arte con l'arte."

39. In a March 12, 1640, letter, Mochi himself drew attention to the challenge of dealing with "le commissure dei tre soli gran pezzi, difficilissime e non mai più vedute, et il debito finimento tanto differente da ogni altro in ciascuna parte della Santa Veronica." The document is cited in Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 134, and fully transcribed in Favero, *Francesco Mochi*, 241. Two years later, Mochi boasted that "la statua non sia di più pezzi che delli tre dati dalle Em.ze vv.," suggesting his pride in using the fewest

number of pieces possible; see Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 135, and for the full text, Favero, *Francesco Mochi*, 241.

40. Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 75.

41. The standard study remains Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's*.

42. Savelli, *Francesco Mochi*, 72, notes that the modern base was designed to approximate the setting for which the work was intended, an altar in the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini. This follows a drawing by Pietro da Cortona, made while a model for Mochi's work was *in situ*.

43. Here I see the work differently than Siemer, "Francesco Mochi," 218, who writes, "Der Marmor zwischen r. Schulter und r. Hand sowie zwischen Parierstange des Schwertes und Griff zur Sicherung der frei gearbeiteten Marmorteile für den Transport stehengelassen, dann aber an Ort und Stelle nicht abgearbeitet."

44. Passeri, *Künstlerbiographien*, 135: "Queste sue Opere riuscite di mala sodisfazione di quelli che dovevano prenderle, quelle delli due Apostoli restarono all Moglie, perch el'Abbate di Monte Casino non volle prederle." On Mochi's *Saint Peter* and *Saint Paul*, see Estelle Lingo's essay in this volume.