Giovanni Battista Braccelli's Etched Devotions before the Vatican Bronze *Saint Peter*

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IN THE MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, the artist Giovanni Battista Braccelli (ca. 1584–1650) created an etching of the bronze *Saint Peter* cult statue at the Vatican surrounded by devotees and votives (fig. 1).[1] This previously unpublished print, titled *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, offers a detailed representation of the devotional object in its early modern location (figs. 2–3): against the northeast pier of the crossing of Saint Peter's Basilica, where Pope Paul V Borghese (r. 1605–21) had installed it on May 29, 1620 (still *in situ* today). The print details a group of early modern visitors gathered around the sculpture—well-dressed men, women, and children to the left of the composition, and an assortment of humbler lay and religious personages to the right. At the center, two pilgrims with walking sticks in hand and broad-brimmed hats slung over their shoulders approach the foot of the sculpted *Saint Peter* with great reverence. The first of the two bows down to touch the top of his head to the underside of the sculpted foot in an act of extreme humility, bracing himself against the sculpture's base as the crowd looks on with approval. Emanating up from the devotees, a series of ex-voto offerings blanket the flanking pilasters of Saint Peter's. One can make out the barest references of standard votive imagery and objects on the sketchily rendered plaques—kneeling figures and canopied beds before floating apparitions—accompanied by

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1. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Stampe.V.143, plate 66.

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Figure 1. Giovanni Battista Braccelli, *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, Rome, ca. 1649, Stampe.V.143, plate 66. Etching, 32 × 29 cm. (© 2020 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.)

hanging crutches, canes, and swaths of fabric. Grouped together with a collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious prints, *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* has gone largely unnoticed in the Vatican collection.[2] Its omission from the artist's oeuvre and the sculpture's history is surprising, given that the print

2. The print is only briefly listed (without reproduction) in a recent summary of the artist's life in Simona Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti sul pittore ed acquafortista seicentesco Giovan Battista Braccelli," in *Atti delle Giornate di Studi: Caravaggio e i suoi*, ed. Pierluigi Carofano (San Giuliano Terme, 2018), 181–90, 185.

Figure 2. *Saint Peter*, attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio or his circle, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican, ca. 1293. Bronze (Alamy).

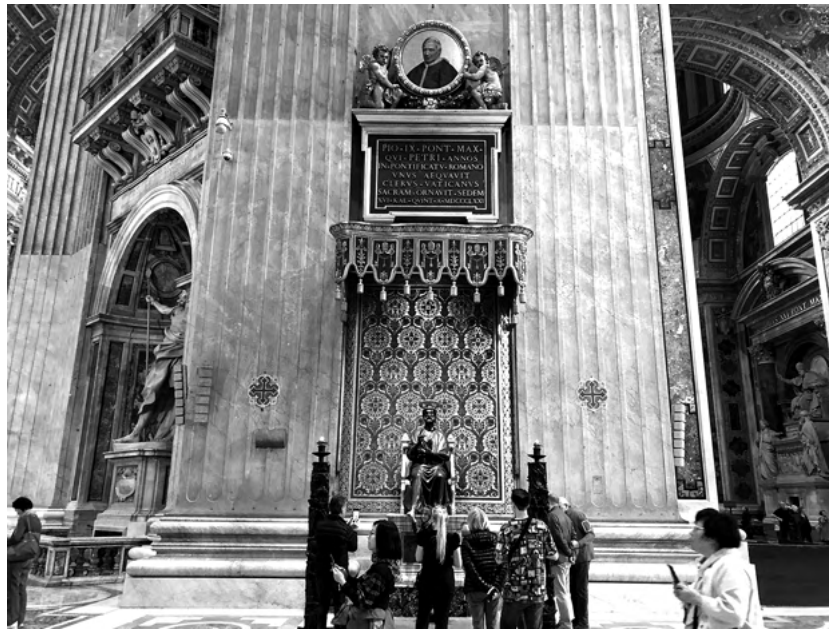

Figure 3. *Saint Peter* in the context of Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican. Bronze (author's photo). Color version available as an online enhancement.

clearly bears the name of the artist, with an inscription identifying the sculptural locus and the bronze *Saint Peter*.

Though Braccelli's print undoubtedly offers an idealized representation of early modern devotion, and likely served to ingratiate the artist to the print's dedicatee, Canon Ugo Ubaldini, the composition also shares rare information regarding contemporary interactions with a sculptural cult object. Braccelli's etching offers a view of the seventeenth-century display of the sculpture to the modern viewer and hints at the many votives once adorning the new basilica. In a close examination of Braccelli's composition along with other works by the artist and his contemporaries, this essay will elucidate the shape and texture of seventeenth-century religious practices associated with this prominent sculpture inside Saint Peter's. By mapping the spatial relationship of the sculpture to the evolving church interior, together with the tactile and votive devotions enacted by devotees on site, I will demonstrate how the bronze *Saint Peter* conveyed a sense of permanence and constancy in a dramatically modernized interior. In essence, Giovanni Battista Braccelli's *Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* reveals the persistence of cultic interactions between the old and new basilicas of Saint Peter's, as well as the official support of such ephemeral practices in the liturgical center of the faith.

THE ARTIST'S CAREER AND *THE BRONZE SAINT PETER WITH VOTIVES*

Giovanni Battista Braccelli's trajectory is shrouded in uncertainty, from his origins in 1580s Genoa, to his death circa 1657–58.[3] Simona Sperindei theorizes that the young artist followed the painter Giovanni Battista Paggi to Florence, where he would subsequently embark on an independent career.[4] Braccelli first appears in the records of the Florentine Accademia del Disegno in 1619, where he continues to be noted sporadically through 1635.[5] At some point thereafter, Braccelli relocated to Rome, where he joined meetings of the Accademia di San Luca between 1642 and 1657.[6] During his first decades of activity, Braccelli published prints in Rome, Livorno, and Naples, which indicate the mobility of either the artist or his carved matrices. Braccelli's best-known publications from this era are the *Bizzarie di varie figure*, published in Livorno in 1624, and the *Figure con instrumenti musicali e boscarecci*, published in Rome circa 1625–30. Braccelli's fifty small-scale prints of the *Bizzarie*, dedicated to Don Pietro de' Medici, grandson of Duke Cosimo I, seem to follow the example of Jacques Callot, who published his *Capricci* in Florence in 1617. His second print book, also known as *The Musicians*, perpetuates the Florentine connection in the dedication, where he references a "Tomasso Guadagni," likely a member of the Florentine Guadagni family based near Santissima Annunziata.[7] These publications showcase not only the artist's skills and ingenuity but also his Florentine associations.

3. The artist's name is written both as "Braccelli" and "Bracelli." In the records of the Accademia del Disegno in Florence, his full name is noted as "Giovanbattista di Antonio Braccelli, detto il Bigio." Luigi Zangheri, *Gli accademici del disegno: Elenco alfabetico* (Florence, 2000), 49; Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti," 181.

4. Braccelli's earliest known commissions in Florence include his *l'Onore*, an allegorical, oil on canvas composition commemorating Michelangelo on the ceiling of the galleria of the Casa Buonarroti (1616–17), and another oil composition, *San Benedetto risuscita un morto* (1620–21), at the local oratory of San Benedetto Bianco. Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti," 182; for the San Benedetto oil on canvas composition, see the catalogue entry in Alessandro Grassi, Michele Scipioni, Giovanni Serafini, eds., *Il rigore e la grazia: La Compagnia di San Benedetto Bianco nel Seicento fiorentino* (Livorno, 2015), 116–17.

5. Zangheri, *Gli accademici del disegno*, 49, as noted in Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti," 182 n. 5. Braccelli signs multiple prints, including *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, with the abbreviation *Pitt.re Fiorentino*. For a brief history of the artist's education, see Sue Welsh Reed and Richard Wallace, *Italian Etchers of the Renaissance and Baroque* (Boston, 1989), 230.

6. Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti," 187 n. 22.

7. A complete facsimile of the *Bizzarie* was published by Wolfgang Max Faust, *Bizzarie di varie figure: Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe Florenz 1624* (Unterschneidheim, 1978). See also Maxime Préaud and Tristan Tzara, *Bracelli: Gravures* (Paris, 1975), 7–8; Reed and Wallace, *Italian Etchers,* 230–33; Jack Werner Stauffacher, "Giovanni Battista Bracelli: *Bizzarie de varie Figure*," *Graphis* 14 (1958): 350–53, 350; Elisabetta Insabato and Silvia Baggio, "Archivi del patriziato fiorentino: Il caso Guadagni," *Opus Incertum* 2 (2007): 3–15, 6.

The first real evidence of Braccelli's interactions with Roman artwork and religious practices appears in 1629–30, when he etched the procession of the local Florentine community from Saint Peter's Basilica to the national church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, designed by the Florentine Agostino Ciampelli (fig. 4).[8] Though the composition is not Braccelli's invention, the scene is relevant in that it documents devotional ephemera, specifically a procession on June 5, 1629, celebrating the recent canonization of Saint Andrea Corsini, a fourteenth-century Florentine elevated to sainthood by Pope Urban VIII Barberini on April 22 of the same year.[9] In the composition, San Giovanni dei Fiorentini's as-yet incomplete façade nearly disappears behind layers of decorative ephemera, including an array of civic symbols, sacred portraits, putti, and angels.[10] According to the personal diary of Braccelli's contemporary Giacinto Gigli, the church was covered in faux marble and paintings in lieu of a finished façade, which included a monumental *giglio* surmounting the central entrance decorated with the portraits of thirteen Florentine saints.[11] Images of five Florentine popes also adorn the church's cornice (most notably, Urban VIII appears above the central doorway, directly below the *giglio*), along with myriad *beati* and local religious personages, and the coats of arms of more than sixty Florentine cardinals.[12] As the largest print in Braccelli's known corpus, the composition conveys the vibrancy of early modern devotion.[13] The crowd of religious men, lay devotees, and musicians cluster around the exterior, dividing their attention between the general spectacle and the hanging standard of Saint Andrea Corsini as it approaches on the right from

8. Construction of the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini began in 1509; the dome was complete by 1634, and the façade by 1738. For more on Agostino Ciambelli, see Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, "Un pittore fiorentino a Roma e i suoi committenti," *Paragone* 265 (1972): 80–99, 90–91.

9. Braccelli's *Procession to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini from Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome* appears in the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657), secretary of Pope Cardinal Francesco Barberini and contemporary of the artist; Mark McDonald, *The Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo: Ceremonies, Costumes, Portraits and Genre*, 3 vols. (London, 2017), 2:352.

10. The Medici *palle* above the right doorway match the Barberini bees above the door on the left.

11. The inscription at the bottom of the print states clearly: "Nel giglio sono figurati li Santi approvati dalla Chiesa . . ."

12. Gigli's description of the façade of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini: ". . . tra proportionata disposizione di pietre, et marmi finti, si vedevano li Ritratti di tredici Santi Fiorentini, li quali stavano accomodati dentro un gran Giglio sopra la porta maggiore, sotto del quale nel fregio di un cornicione per la larghezza della facciata erano accomodati li ritratti di tutti li Beati della loro Nazione: et sotto il cornicione si vedevano li Ritratti di cinque Papi Fiorentini, cioè Leone X, Clemente VII, Clemente VIII, Leone XI, et nel mezzo di questi Urbano VIII, et finalmente vi erano dipinte l'Arme di più di 60 Cardinali pure Fiorentini, et altri ornamenti." For a full transcription, see Giacinto Gigli, *Diario di Roma*, 2 vols., ed. Manlio Barberito (Rome, 1994), 1:178; also transcribed in Fagiolo dell'Arco, *La festa barocca* (Rome, 1997), 272.

13. Braccelli's *Procession to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini from Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome* measures 33.3 cm in length and 49.9 cm in width.

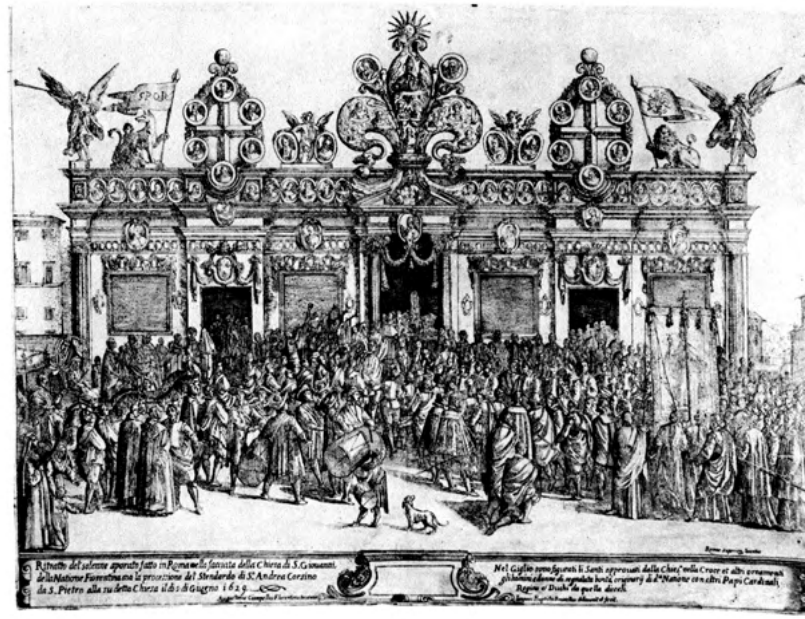

Figure 4. Giovanni Battista Braccelli after Agostino Ciampelli, *Procession to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini from Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome*, 1629. Etching, 33.3 × 49.9 cm. (*The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 44 [New York: Abaris Books, 1983], 268.)

the direction of the Vatican. Ciambelli's attention to ephemeral display may have influenced Braccelli's own subsequent interpretations of urban cult worship.

In the 1630s and 1640s, Braccelli turned his attention to the Vatican complex. This is the period in which the artist also etched the bronze *Saint Peter*, though its exact date is unknown. Between 1635 and 1640, Braccelli rendered Gianlorenzo Bernini's (1598–1680) bronze baldachin (fig. 5), and the four colossal sculptures of Saint Peter's crossing: Francesco Mochi's *Veronica*, Bernini's *Longinus*, Andrea Bolgi's *Helena*, and François Duquesnoy's *Sant'Andrea*.[14] Braccelli's rendition of all five sculptures appear without reference to the new interior, relying instead on a blank background or uniform, horizontally hatched lines and close framing that give little sense of scale or location. Like the *Veronica* (fig. 6), the *Colossi* bear inscriptions stating the sculptor—in this case Francesco Mochi—the date of production, and the composition's installation "in Temp[lo] S. Petri in Vaticano."[15]

14. A rare surviving copy of Braccelli's print of Duquesnoy's *Sant'Andrea* resides in Harvard University's Fogg Museum Collection (purchased by the Jacob Rosenberg Fund in 1990).

15. For more on the statue's installation, see Estelle Lingo, "Francesco Mochi's Balancing Act and the Prehistory of Bernini's Four Rivers Fountain," in *Matters of Weight: Force, Gravity, and Aesthetics in the Early Modern Period*, ed. David Young Kim (Emsdetten, 2013), 129–50, 137.

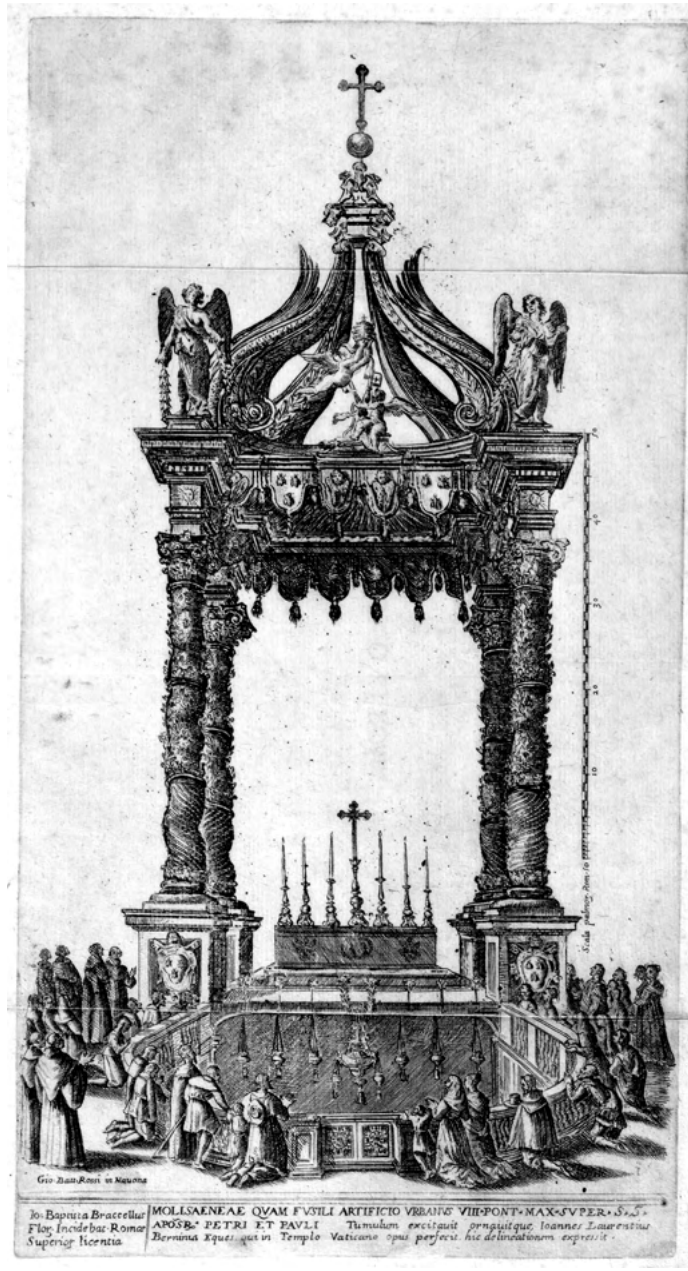

Figure 5. Giovanni Battista Braccelli after Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Baldachin of Saint Peter's Basilica* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de' Rossi, Piazza Navona, ca. 1639). Etching, 38.8 × 20.6 cm. (Roma-Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Bene Culturali, Museo di Roma, Rome.)

Figure 6. Giovanni Battista Braccelli after Francesco Mochi, *Saint Veronica* (Rome: Giovanni Battista de Rossi, Piazza Navona, 1640). Etching, 26.3 × 18.3 cm. (Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Jakob Rosenberg Fund © President and Fellows of Harvard College.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

The *Veronica* was the last of the four *Colossi* to be installed in Saint Peter's and was unveiled to Pope Urban VIII in November 1640. Either Braccelli worked quickly to produce his etchings within the year, or he retroactively dated the etching to its 1640 installation.

A publisher's mark indicates that all five of the Saint Peter's crossing compositions came from the de' Rossi publishing house on Piazza Navona, an association that the bronze *Saint Peter* print does not share.[16] Sperindei, the only scholar to comment on *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, associates the composition with Braccelli's *Baldachin* and dates both to 1626, which actually predates the final design plans of Bernini's architectural construction.[17] Furthermore, the publishing house of Giovanni Battista de' Rossi on Piazza Navona opened only in 1635.[18] The Roman numerals XXXVIIII discovered by Maxime Préaud and Tristan Tzara at the bottom right corner of a version of the *Baldachin* print at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France may indicate an actual date of 1639 for the print.[19]

The artist returned again to the Vatican Basilica in 1649 to document another new composition in the space, namely Alessandro Algardi's high relief carving of *Pope Leo the Great before Attila the Hun* (fig. 7). Braccelli recreates in detail the

16. The de' Rossi family is a multigenerational printing and publishing house, with many storefronts in the neighborhood around Piazza Navona. For an overview of the de' Rossi family and their impact on Roman print production and circulation, see Francesca Herndon-Consagra, "The De Rossi Family Print Publishing Shop: A Study in the History of the Print Industry of Seventeenth-Century Rome" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1992).

17. The Bernini commission was not complete until the 1633 approval of the final orb and cross mounted on the baldachin's pinnacle. Sperindei bases the date of 1626 for *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* on an annotation on the support paper of the *Baldachin* print at the Gabinetto Comunale delle Stampe di Roma; Sperindei, "Nuovi documenti," 185 n. 16. For the orb and cross debate, see Maria Grazia D'Amelio, "Tra ossa, polveri e ceneri: il 'fuoriasse' del baldacchino di San Pietro a Roma," *Annali di architettura* 17 (2005): 127–36, 131–32. Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco supports this discrepancy, noting that on November 18, 1626, Urban VIII consecrated the new nave of Saint Peter's while Bernini's baldachin was "ancora in attesa delle grandi colonne bronzee." See Dell'Arco, *La festa barocca*, 267.

18. In 1635, Giovanni Battista de' Rossi split from a partnership with his brother Giuseppe il Giovane (ca. 1601–44) to open the bottega directly on Piazza Navona, where he remained until his brother's death. All prints stating "Gio. Batt. Rossi in Navona" therefore date from between 1635 and 1644, which further disproves the 1626 dating as asserted by Sperindei and Préaud and Tzara. For a concise summary of the de' Rossi family, see Georg Schelbert, "All'ombra di Falda: La pianta di Roma di Matteo Gregorio De Rossi del 1668," in *Piante di Roma dal rinascimento ai catasti*, ed. Mario Bevilacqua and Marcello Fagiolo (Rome, 2012), 272–83.

19. Though Préaud and Tzara acknowledge that the Roman numerals XXXVIIII in the bottom right corner may provide a possible date, they maintain the circa 1626 date in their publication. Even if the etching was made before 1639, the design can be safely dated to 1635 or later, again following Bernini's 1633 design for the baldachin, and the finite dates of the de' Rossi publishing house on Piazza Navona (see the previous three notes). For the print with Roman numerals, see Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des estampes et de la photographie, Reserve be-6-fol.

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Figure 7. Giovanni Battista Braccelli after Alessandro Algardi, *Leo the Great before Attila the Hun*, Rome, 1649. Etching, 39.5 × 26.5 cm. (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

monumental encounter as interpreted by Algardi: Pope Leo the Great approaches Attila from the left, traversing the central axis of the composition. Backed by the miraculous appearance of Saints Peter and Paul in the clouds overhead, Leo dominates the encounter, as Attila gazes in fear upon the pope's supernatural support, with one foot already crossed over the other to flee the scene. This print is clearly signed outside the frame of the relief in the top right corner. Again, the tight cropping of the composition precludes any sense of the new basilica, focusing instead on Algardi's composition. Given that the final relief sculpture was not installed in Saint Peter's Basilica until 1653, Braccelli based his engraving on the full-scale stucco model that had been installed at the basilica on or before December 12, 1648.[20] Luckily for modern scholars, the stucco model survives at the Roman Oratory of San Filippo Neri. Among the many subtle differences between model and marble, Jennifer Montagu notes the slightly lesser amount of folds in the pope's robes as they fall between himself and Attila, and a serpent coiling around a standard in the top right corner of the stucco prototype. The lesser drapery and coiled reptile also appear in Braccelli's etching.[21]

The *Procession to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini*, the *Baldachin* and *Colossi*, and the Algardi stucco demonstrate that Braccelli worked in Roman religious sites under active construction and documented many high-profile works of art. Unlike his previous book compilations, these productions are large-scale and can operate as isolated compositions. Current scholarship recognizes a total of eighty-eight prints by the artist.[22] The question now is where to situate the undated *Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*. The print seems singular, rather than part of a collection like the *Bizzarie*, or even the *Colossi*. In terms of subject, the closest parallel to the bronze *Saint Peter* print might be the *Procession to San Giovanni dei Fiorentini* in that both genre-like compositions focus on devotional activities; however, the fact that the design of the procession was not Braccelli's own creation calls this comparison into question. The *Baldachin* and *Colossi* prints are also problematic because all five of the crossing prints lack context, other than brief inscriptions of "in Templo Vaticano."[23] Of these later works, the *Baldachin* print is the only production that includes

20. Jennifer Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT, 1985), 1:142 n. 20.

21. Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi*, 2:358–64, figs. 131–35.

22. This tally includes one final composition comparable in its inventiveness to the *Bizzarie*: the *Alfabeto figurato*, a single print representing the letters of the alphabet composed with contorted, nude figures (published in Naples in 1632). Reed and Wallace, *Italian Etchers*, 230.

23. The *Baldachin* and *Colossi* prints differ in scale and layout: the sculpture prints averaging about 27cm long and 18 cm wide, while the *Baldachin* print is slightly larger at 38.8 cm by 20.6 cm. By comparison, *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* is nearly square, measuring 32 cm by 29 cm.

devotees as in the bronze *Saint Peter* etching. Even so, the artist's incorporation of a scale bar in Roman *palmi* running vertically along the right side of Bernini's structure implies that the diminutive figures may serve more as accentuations of scale than as engaging characters. Similarly, the viewer's position above and away from the nominal devotees in the *Baldachin* print prioritizes the monumentality of the architecture over specific actions or gestures.

Of the many prints under discussion, the closest in dimension and quality to *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* is the reproduction of Algardi's *Leo the Great before Attila*.[24] The Algardi print prioritizes the close study of the work of art, with a quality of line and shadow surpassing Braccelli's earlier renditions of the *Colossi* and the *Baldachin*. Beyond measurements and quality of execution, the font utilized in both (specifically, the dedicatory inscription on the bronze *Saint Peter* print mentioning Canon Ugo Ubaldini, and the Latin and Italian inscriptions below the Algardi composition) indicate near contemporaneous creation. In addition, the similarity in print size between the Algardi and bronze *Saint Peter*, and paradoxically their lack of publisher's marks, may actually indicate that they were published in similar contexts.[25]

The choice of subject in this case may also be relevant in the search for fruitful associations. Francesco Maria Torrigio (1580–1649), a canon of San Nicola in Carcere and lifetime Roman resident, writes in his 1618 *Le sacre grotte vaticane* that the bronze sculpture was created as an ex-voto offering to Saint Peter by Pope Leo the Great (r. 440–61) following his famous battle against Attila the Hun in 452.[26] Thus Algardi's *Leo the Great before Attila* memorializes a herculean feat for which the represented pope supposedly commissioned the bronze *Saint Peter*. Given these many similarities and the narrative parallel, *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* likely dates closer to the 1649 *Leo the Great before Attila* than Braccelli's other known compositions. The late date proposed may indicate that both the bronze *Saint Peter* and Algardi prints were manufactured in anticipation of the 1650 Jubilee year.

24. The *Leo the Great before Attila the Hun* etching measures 39.5 cm by 26.5 cm.

25. It should be noted that the Vatican Library prints have all been cropped and glued to support paper. The *Leo the Great before Attila the Hun* etching housed in the Rijksmuseum Collection is likewise cropped.

26. Francesco Maria Torrigio estimates that the sculpture was at the Vatican by 453. Francesco Maria Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte vaticane, Cioè narratione delle cose più notabili, che sono sotto il pavimento della Basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano in Roma* (Rome, 1618 [1635 edition]), 126–27; Claudio Giardini, *Considerazioni intorno ad un modello per Attila* (Rome, 1989), 19–23. For the life of Torrigio, see Massimo Ceresa, "Notizie per la biografia di Francesco Maria Torrigio," in *Francesco Maria Torrigio (1580–1649): San Pietro e le sacre Memorie*, ed. Daniela Gallavotti Cavallero (Rome, 2015), 5–15.

CANON UBALDINI AND THE BRONZE *SAINT PETER*

The Italian inscriptions across the bottom of *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* etching provide clear information regarding the artist and the print's intended audience. In a band demarcating the limit of the composition, Braccelli dedicates the work to the most illustrious Ugo Ubaldini, Canon of the Basilica of Saint Peter's.[27] The subsequent text reads: "There is no doubt that among the infinite statues in the city of Rome the most celebrated for devotion seems to be the one in metal of Saint Peter, Prince of the APOSTLES, that the faithful adore in the Vatican. Therefore I desired to represent this in print in diverse parts of the world so that they might see that effigy, which is revered by all. Dedicating [this image] to Your Grace with a prayer that you might accept this little demonstration of my servitude and humble reverence."[28] The text elaborates on the engraver's intention to circulate the image of the bronze *Saint Peter*, and implies Braccelli's deference to the canon. The print is then signed in the bottom right corner: "your most Humble and Devout Servant, Giovanni Battista Braccelli, Florentine painter."[29]

Ugo Ubaldini was a canon of Saint Peter's from 1607 until his death in 1658.[30] He was a relative of the short-lived Pope Leo XI de' Medici, and brother of the better-known Cardinal Ambassador Roberto Ubaldini. The Ubaldini family insignia—silver deer antlers on a blue ground below a badge of the Florentine *popolo*—appears prominently in the central cartouche under a cardinal's hat, undoubtedly

27. "All Ill.^{mo} et R.^{mo} Sig.^{re} Pron' Col.^{mo} Il.^{ro} Ugo Ubaldini Can.^{co} Della Basilica Di S. Pietro."

28. "Non è dubio alcuno che tra l'infinite Statue che nella Citta di Roma si veggono la piu Celebre per la Divotione sia quella di Metallo di S. Pietro Prencipe de gl'APOSTOLI, che nel Vaticano da fedeli s'Adora. Quindi ho volsuto [*sic*] metterla in Stampa acciò in diverse Parti del Mondo si Végga Quella effigie, che da tutti è riverita. Dedicandola a V. Sig^{re} con pregarla Vogli gradire Questa piccola Demostratione della mia Servitu di faccio hum^{a} Riv^{a}." All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

29. "Hum^{o} e Devot^{mo} Serv^{re} Gio: Battista Braccelli Pitt^{re} fiorentino d.d." The print further references an official license to produce with the "Superioru[m] Licenza" included in the bottom left corner of the central scene.

30. Herman H. Schwedt, "Ubaldini, Roberto," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (Herzberg, 1997), vol. 12, cols. 800–804; Grazyna Jurkowlaniec, "A Miracle of Art and Therefore a Miraculous Image: A Neglected Aspect of the Reception of Michelangelo's Vatican *Pietà*," *Artibus et Historiae* 72 (2015): 175–98, 192 n. 24. Ugo Ubaldini was the son of Marco Antonio Ubaldini, an official in the apostolic chamber of Perugia, and Lucrezia della Gherardesca, sister of Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici (who briefly sat on the papal throne in 1605 as Pope Leo XI). Ugo's brother, Roberto Ubaldini, became canon of the basilica under Paul V Borghese on July 9, 1606, then subsequently rose to the cardinalate and became papal ambassador to the French until his death in 1635. Schwedt, "Ubaldini, Roberto," col. 801. In correspondence and official documentation, Ugo used both the names "Ubaldini" and "Ubaldi." Massimiliano Ghilardi, "'Sacrate grotte, e venerandi horror'. Corpi santi, reliquie e una 'singolare assenza' nell'opera del Torrigio," in *Francesco Maria Torrigio,* ed. Gallavotti Cavallero, 86.

an ingratiating reference to Ugo's higher-ranking brother.[31] Louise Rice's archival research proves that Ugo Ubaldini played an integral role in the reorganization of Saint Peter's Basilica as one of two representatives of the Chapter of Saint Peter's. For example, Ubaldini was partially responsible for the subject and orientation of individual altars.[32] Though Ubaldini's career as canon does not seem explicitly linked to the bronze statue, the artist's inscription and choice of subject implies that the patron may have been sympathetic or personally devoted to the cult object. Regardless, as the descendant of a noted Florentine family and a lesser branch of the ruling Medici, Ubaldini was a viable choice of patron for an artist cultivating Florentine connections in Rome.

A FULCRUM OF SAINT PETER'S BASILICA

Modern visitors to the bronze statue can attest to the sculpture's tactile accessibility as referenced in Braccelli's etching. Standing before the statue today, the viewer's eyes are drawn to the worn surfaces of the sculpture's legs and feet, where little or no definition of the original casting remains, other than the deep crevices between the saint's toes and instep. Contact with the underside of the foot reveals that the bronze *Saint Peter* has no sole: an empty cavity greets the hand that runs along the bottom of the protruding appendage where the etched pilgrim touches his head, reinforcing the cult object's materiality.[33] As such, the image is an inanimate sign for the saintly body buried in the nearby *Confessio* below Bernini's baldachin in the adjacent crossing. The rounded edges of the metal appendage, and its gentle curvature—bending slightly down over the edge of its podium—signals that this foot

31. The pilgrim touching his head to *Saint Peter*'s foot conveniently obscures the only other family crest in the composition, namely Cardinal Richard Olivier de Longueil's coat of arms across the sculpted base, which was appended to the sculpture during its fifteenth-century phase in Saint Martino's Chapel. Hannes Roser, *St. Peter in Rom im 15. Jahrhundert. Studien zu Architektur und skulpturaler Ausstattung* (Munich, 2005), 242–45.

32. Rice records that Canons Ugo Ubaldini and Mario Bovio represented the Chapter of Saint Peter's (a highly esteemed division in the Holy See) in meetings with the pope and the Congregation of the Fabbrica of Saint Peter's (the construction and maintenance crew of the basilica). Ubaldini represented the Chapter of St. Peter's by the start of negotiations regarding the third and final program proposal with Pope Urban VIII Barberini in February 1627. On Ubaldini and Bovio, see Louise Rice, *The Altars and Altarpieces of New St. Peter's: Outfitting the Basilica, 1621–1666* (Cambridge, 1997), 101, and on the Chapter of Saint Peter's, 12–16, and appendices 21, 308–10.

33. Anne Dunlop and Adam Kumler discuss the conflict of real and perceived materialities and artifice in Catholic versus Protestant debates in Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop, and Pamela H. Smith, eds., *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250–1750* (Manchester, 2015), 68–87, 119–32. See also Caroline Walker Bynum's discussion of medieval materiality and *Andachtsbilder* in *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York, 2011), 38–121.

has been touched for quite some time, the evidence of which incites new viewers to perpetuate tactile devotions.

Reverent touching of the bronze *Saint Peter* was not exceptional, but rather a devotional norm in early modern Rome. The city hosted multiple sculptures that encouraged tactile worship, with Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* and Jacopo Sansovino's *Madonna del Parto* as notable early modern examples.[34] Discoloration and excessive polish on the lower legs and feet of both signal long-standing interactions, and the metal covers later appended to the sculptures' worn feet reflect the administrative desire to protect the marble while still preserving the act of touch.[35] But the cases of the *Risen Christ* and *Madonna del Parto* differ from the bronze *Saint Peter* in multiple ways. First and foremost, the *Risen Christ* and *Madonna del Parto* are contemporary compositions: both were acknowledged in the period as modern, or at least created within recent history. By contrast, the bronze *Saint Peter* was understood by early modern viewers to be ancient. Second, the context of these modern sculptures remained largely intact: though Sant'Agostino was renovated during the sixteenth century, the cult site of the *Madonna del Parto* did not move to an alternative location. Likewise, the original location of the *Risen Christ* changed while Michelangelo was at work on the sculpture, but once installed, its location beside the high altar of Santa Maria sopra Minerva became the permanent center for its cultic devotion.[36] The stability of the two objects allowed tactile devotions to become ingrained in each interior, and both remain on display and are still touched—with or without formal approval—today.

Such practices demonstrate the site specificity of devotion in the Catholic faith. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, to local cult sites such as the House of the Virgin at

34. On the *Risen Christ*, see William Wallace, "Pedes Peregrinorum/Pedes Christi," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 28, no. 2 (2009): 22–27; Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "The Body as 'Vera Effigies' in Michelangelo's Art: The Minerva *Christ*," in *L'immagine di Cristo dall'acheropita alla mano d'artista: Dal tardo medioevo all'età barocca*, ed. Christoph Frommel and Gerhald Wolf (Vatican City, 2006), 269–321; William Wallace, "Michelangelo's Risen Christ," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 4 (1997): 1251–80; Linda Ann Nolan, "Touching the Divine: Mobility, Devotion, and Display of Religious Objects in Early Modern Rome" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2010), 109–29. On the *Madonna del Parto*, see Mary Garrard, "Jacopo Sansovino's Madonna in Sant'Agostino: An Antique Source Rediscovered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975): 333–38. Though not sculptural, the *Lateran Christ* is another devotional object habitually touched in ceremonies; specifically the feet were ritually cleansed by the pope himself every year; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), 311. Regarding tactile interactions more broadly, see Peter Dent, ed., *Sculpture and Touch* (Burlington, VT, 2014); and Francesca Bacci, ed., *Art and the Senses* (Oxford, 2011).

35. Erin Giffin, "Body and Apparition: Material Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italian Religious Sculpture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2017), 113.

36. For an overview of the *Risen Christ*'s execution and evolving installation location, see Giffin, "Body and Apparition," 109–11.

Loreto, or to objects such as the Column of Christ at Santa Prassede in Rome attest to the value appended to cult centers and objects. This sensitivity carries into replicas of devotional sites as well. Megan Holmes and Sara Matthews-Grieco have explored the importance of the Santissima Annunziata cult site in the Servite church of the same name in Florence.[37] The position of the miraculous fresco against the retro façade of the church was a vital component of the efficacious image, to the extent that the church was enlarged in the apse end rather than at the entrance to protect the fresco. Replicas of the cult image across Tuscany were duly created in the same location inside new churches, that is, on the internal left wall of the church façade. In this respect, the contemporary sculptural compositions in Rome built on spatial associations visible in many early modern Catholic centers of worship.

Unlike the *Madonna del Parto* or the Santissima Annunziata miraculous fresco, the bronze *Saint Peter* moved repeatedly around the Vatican complex. First noted in 1454–55 in a text by Canon Maffeo Vegio of Saint Peter's, the sculpture had once been situated in an oratory dedicated to Saints Processo and Martiniano just outside the apse of the old basilica and was subsequently relocated into the chapel of Saint Martino off the basilica's left transept.[38] There it garnered so much attention that Vegio deemed the cult locus to be the second most important altar of Saint Peter's, subordinate only to the basilica's high altar.[39] But the chapel of Saint Martino was destroyed to make way for Pope Nicholas V's (r. 1447–55) new fortifications. After a stint in the chapel of the Carceri, which was briefly renamed "di

37. Preserved spatial relationships have been explored by Megan Holmes through the Florentine cult site at the Santissima Annunziata and its various Tuscan replicas, notably in the church of Santo Spirito at Prato. See Megan Holmes, "The Elusive Origins of the Cult of the Annunziata in Florence," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Erik Thuno and Gerhard Wolf (Rome, 2004), 97–121, 110; Sara Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli della SS. Annunziata," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 25, no. 3 (2009): 272–92; Georges Didi-Huberman and Gerald Moore, "Ex-Voto: Image, Organ, Time," *L'Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (2007): 7–16. For religious sites in Florence more broadly, see Megan Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven, CT, 2013); John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford, 1994).

38. Maffeo Vegio, *De rebus antiquis memorabilibus basilicae S. Petri Romae* (Rome, 1455). This text is mentioned in Margherita Guarducci, *San Pietro e Sant'Ippolito: Storia di statue famose in Vaticano* (Rome, 1991), 20–21; Angiola Maria Romanini, "Nuovi dati sulla statua bronzea di San Pietro in Vaticano," *Arte medievale* 2 (1990): 1–50, 1–3. For an English translation and analysis, see Christine Smith and Joseph F. O'Connor, *Eyewitness to Old St. Peter's: A Study of Maffeo Vegio's "Remembering the Ancient History of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome," with Translation and a Digital Reconstruction of the Church* (Cambridge, 2019), 23–24, 199.

39. "Neque in tota basilica post altare majus ullus locus erat ad quem major prae devotione fieret concursus populorum, majoraque oblatae etiam stipis commoda susciperentur, in cujus plane etiam monasterio legimus a primula usque aetate enutritum fuisse Leonem IIII . . ." Vegio as cited in Guarducci, *San Pietro e Sant'Ippolito*, 21 n. 3.

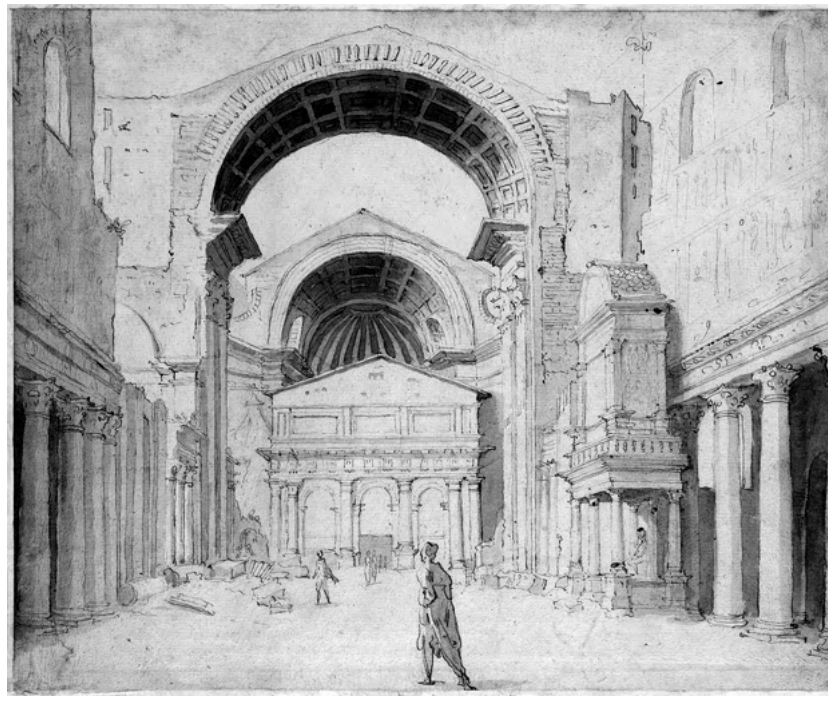

Figure 8. Maarten van Heemskerck, *Drawing of the Nave of Old Saint Peter's*, Rome, 1532–36. Pen and ink with brown wash, 22.2 × 27.3 cm. (bpk / Kupferstichkabinett, SMB / Volker-H. Schneider, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

S. Pietro dello bronzo," the sculpture was moved again into the old nave.[40] Maarten van Heemskerck's drawings of the semi-destroyed Saint Peter's of the 1530s (fig. 8) records the statue in this central location under the organ commissioned by Pope Alexander VI Borgia (r. 1492–1503). At this site, the bronze *Saint Peter* continued to be an object of devotional interaction, with worshippers kissing and touching the pontiff's foot and lower leg and dressing the statue in donations of rich textiles, liturgical robes, and papal crowns.[41]

40. Guarducci cites Tiberio Alfarano (1525–96) and his 1571–90 plans of old Saint Peter's Basilica, which state the double names of the chapel "dei Carceri" and "di S. Pietro dello bronzo." Guarducci, *San Pietro e Sant'Ippolito*, 24; Gallavotti Cavallero, *Francesco Maria Torrigio*, 17–26

41. On the ritual act of kissing the foot of the bronze *Saint Peter*, see Willem Frijhoff, "The Kiss Sacred and Profane: Reflections on a Cross-Cultural Confrontation," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan Bremmer (Cambridge, 1994), 210–36, 214–21. These actions mirror historic and early modern practices of devotees kissing the foot of the ruling pope. Members of the cardinalate traditionally kissed the new pontiff's foot during thirteenth-century papal coronations. Michel Andrieu, *Le Pontifical de la curie romaine au XIIIe siècle* (Vatican City, 1940), 2:267, 273–74, cited in Joanna Cannon, "Kissing the Virgin's Foot: *Adoratio* before the Madonna and Child Enacted, Depicted, Imagined," *Studies in Iconography* 31 (2010): 9 nn. 37–38. Similarly, Nolan cites documentation during the pontificate of Clement VIII detailing the many dignitaries and nobles that

The sculpture remained under Alexander VI's organ within the fragmented interior for over a century. One hundred years is not long in the history of the Catholic Church, but those decades spanned formative years for the newly emerging Saint Peter's Basilica. Meanwhile, the church around the sculptural cult object was transformed. As Heemskerck's drawing shows, the apse and western end of the preexisting church were the first to be destroyed, redefined by the monumental arches of Michelangelo's new basilica. Though the organ originally marked the midpoint of the nave, in Heemskerck's semidestroyed Saint Peter's it stands at the extreme end of what remained. Shortly after Heemskerck documented the sculpture *in situ*, the Chapter of Saint Peter's constructed a barrier wall between the surviving nave of the original structure and the new construction site in 1538, following the direction of Pope Paul III Farnese.[42] In this configuration, the truncated nave-turned-church—measuring only about fifty meters in length—redefined the epicenter of Saint Peter's for the visiting laity, who would only have had access to the old space while the new construction took place behind the protective wall. From this point on, the bronze *Saint Peter* inhabited a position just before, and at a ninety-degree angle to, the church's temporary apse, which was erected against the barrier wall. The makeshift situation appears in Giacomo Grimaldi's *Interior of the Nave of Old Saint Peter's*, where Alexander's "organo" is identified by name at the center of the scene, just to the right of the high altar and parallel with the nave colonnade (fig. 9).[43]

Given the impossibility of returning the sculpture to its earlier locations, the site of Alexander's organ became the center for the cult of the bronze *Saint Peter*, and its placement within the temporary basilica impacted the sculpture's subsequent display inside the new structure. Though the sculpture was moved another fifty meters or more down the length of the interior following Pope Paul V Borghese's 1605–6 nave demolition, its relationship to the high altar remained constant. This consistency is remarkable when one considers that the rest of the complex of the new Saint Peter's was redesigned with an unparalleled cohesion of subject matter across the new altars and chapels, in which Canon Ubaldini played a direct role. The bronze *Saint Peter* does not even exist within a formal chapel; Linda Nolan has pointed out that the sculpture was never incorporated into the seven privileged altars of the new basilica.[44] The sculpture's preexisting location and relationship to the makeshift

desired to kiss the feet of the pope; BAV, Urb. Lat. 1060, 216/258^{r}, as cited in Nolan, "Touching the Divine," 12 n. 15.

42. Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 17.

43. Giacomo Grimaldi was a member of the Chapter of Saint Peter's, hired to document the demolition of the old basilica in 1605. BAV, MS.Barb.lat.2733.pt.1, 0292–0293 (fols. 104v–105r). Cited in Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 17.

44. Nolan, "Touching the Divine," 98.

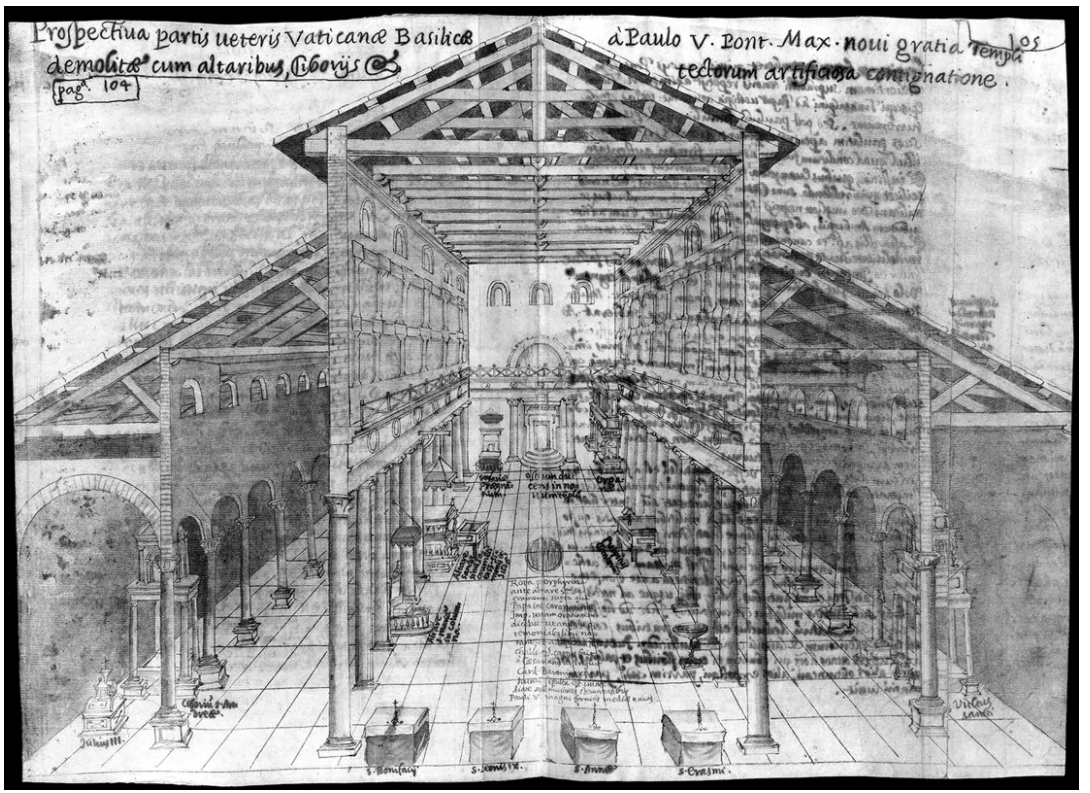

Figure 9. Giacomo Grimaldi, *Interior of the Nave of Old Saint Peter's*, MS.Barb.lat.2733.pt.1, 0292–0293 (fols. 104v–105r), ca. 1619–20. Pen and ink and wash on paper. (© 2020 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

high altar of the old basilica were so important to early modern devotees that its status was preserved in the new interior. This devotional parallel was astutely recognized and preserved by the canons and the Fabbrica.[45]

From a twenty-first-century vantage point, Braccelli's print draws attention to a sculpted object in a familiar setting. For the early modern devotee, the situation was more likely the reverse: the object was more familiar than the space.[46] The sculptural body and its consistent presence in the Vatican complex grounded the early modern visitor whose entire experience inside Saint Peter's prior to the demolition would have consisted of the truncated nave.[47] By the time of Paul V's 1605–6 mandate, the makeshift basilica had stood for nearly seventy years: the old church's original appearance had fallen away from living memory. The other constants in the new complex—including the central sepulcher and various papal tombs—would have been inaccessible to lay parishioners and pilgrims, open only to members of the Holy See, the high-ranking elite, and laborers allowed past the barrier wall.[48] The site-specific fulcrum of the bronze *Saint Peter* thus orients the viewer as one of the last vestiges of the ancient structure, a constant for devotees lost in the towering basilica.

Touch serves a conduit function inside this new space: by touching the sculpture supposedly commissioned by Leo the Great, the visitor connects long-standing devotion with the new monumental interior. In this respect, I agree with Nolan's identification of the bronze *Saint Peter* as a "touchstone," but the sculpture deserves the term not just for its ancient connotations and tactile precedent but even more so for its spatial relevance and its status as a kind of relic, as elaborated here.[49]

45. Pope Urban VIII Barberini is the only pope to briefly express an intention to relocate the sculpture, sometime in the 1620s. On the back of a letter between the pope's cup bearer, Angelo Giorio, and his *economo*, Carlo Ghetti, Rice found a brief notation that the pope desired to place the bronze *Saint Peter* in a particular location, though no other details are provided. The fact that the sculpture did not move may demonstrate that the will of the community in this case was stronger than the desires of the pontiff. Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 100 n. 77.

46. This familiarity with the sculpture was further bolstered by its use in print. For example, the sculpture appears facing the frontispiece of Paolo de' Angelis' *Basilicae veteris vaticanae descriptio* (Rome, 1646). This representation of the sculpture clearly preserves the coat of arms of Cardinal Richard Olivier de Longueil (see n. 31 of this article).

47. Rice, *Altars and Altarpieces*, 18.

48. Only a few papal monuments made the move into the upper church; most relocated to the Vatican grotto underneath the basilica. For an image of the apse before the removal of the barrier wall, see G. Maggi, *Canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo*, 1610, in the BAV, Gabinetto delle Stampe, Cart. Canonizzazioni n. 2, as cited in D'Amelio, "Tra ossa, polveri e ceneri," 128, fig. 4.

49. Nolan promotes the touchstone concept but does not trace the history of the sculpture's location other than acknowledging its liminal status outside the basilica's seven thematic altars. Nolan, "Touching the Divine," 95–99.

Braccelli's etching effectively imparts the impression of touching an unshaken cult epicenter, around which the new edifice arose.

DETAILS FROM THE SCENE

When Braccelli created *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, he was among the first to experience the newly constructed Roman basilica. The print opened a window onto the imposing interior for seventeenth-century Catholic communities that harbored deep associations with the preexisting structure. Given that the basilica's nave had been consecrated on November 18, 1626, by Urban VIII, the 1650 Jubilee was the first jubilee year enacted in the relatively complete setting. Rather than offer the viewer an orienting perspectival vantage down the nave, Braccelli references the new space through the large-scale pilasters articulated with rigid flutes flanking the sacred statue. The architectural details dissolve behind the clusters of people beside the cult object, whose voluminous robes augment the sense of depth in an otherwise shallow pictorial plane. Braccelli amplifies the overbearing dimensions of the bronze statue by gently diminishing the scale of the pilasters, and shifting their decorative, raised mosaic medallions from above the saint's head to the level of his waist (compare figs. 1 and 3). The altered scale intensifies the sculpture's monumentality, which is reiterated in the lesser scale of the devotees at the sculpture's base.

The inscription across the bottom of the print clearly states the print's intention to circulate the cult object and its well-known cult worship to "diverse Parts of the World." To the left of the bronze *Saint Peter*, Braccelli represents upper-class members of what is likely local Roman society, with women in characteristic caped sleeves and men in high collars with broad-brimmed hats in hand. To the right and center of the cult object, pilgrims of unknown origin humbly approach from the basilica's eastward entrance to interact with the statue. They dress in what had become the uniform of pilgrimage for the early modern viewer: tall walking sticks; hats adorned with symbols of worship; caped mantels ending at the knee; high leg coverings and simple shoes; travel necessities such as water flasks and money pouches tied at their waists; and personal belongings strapped to their backs. Similar pilgrimage figures appear in earlier representations from the sixteenth century, such as the frescoed pilgrims in the Calvary Chapel at the Sacro Monte at Varallo by Gaudenzio Ferrari and his workshop (fig. 10), as well as in contemporary representations of priests and peasants in the etchings of Giovenale Boetto (1603/4–78) and others, as preserved in Cassiano dal Pozzo's personal print collection.[50] The variety of visitors is unified by the equal

50. Giovenale Boetto's prints of priests and peasants date from 1634. McDonald, *The Paper Museum*, 2:506–7 (numbers 805–8). For the Varallo pilgrims, see Christine Göttler, "The Temptation

Figure 10. Workshop of Gaudenzio Ferrari, Pilgrims in the Chapel of Calvary, Varallo, ca. 1517–21. Fresco (author's photo). Color version available as an online enhancement.

distribution of votives appended to the pilasters above the crowd's heads. The sketchy references to divine intercession at sickbeds, beside carriages, and before kneeling supplicants unite local and pilgrimage devotions. In this respect, the act

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of the Senses at the Sacro Monte di Varallo," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden, 2013), 393–451, 406–7.

of pilgrimage, and its associated accoutrements (clothing and votive offerings), present the current state of dedication to Saint Peter in Rome, evoking a tradition that predates the new interior.

While in the Algardi composition Braccelli relied on a clarity of line and shadow to focus the viewer's attention on the ingenuity of the sculptor and his design, the *Saint Peter* etching prioritizes the sensory experience of the devout visitor. Braccelli's conspicuous plate tone—a uniform film of ink tinting the surface of *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, especially visible in a few inadvertent bare stripes across the floor of the depicted basilica (fig. 1.2; figs. 1.2, 1.3, 13 are available online)—reinforces the momentary sensation of the bronze *Saint Peter* print that further separates this image from Braccelli's oeuvre. The effect conveys an ambient shadow cast throughout the interior, as one would encounter in late afternoon or evening prayer, which corresponds with the rightward angle of the shadows cast by the sculpture, its canopy, and the devotees present.[51]

Braccelli's visual documentation of the pilgrim's experience parallels the immersive details found in contemporary texts written about the cult site. Torrigio's *I sacri trofei romani del trionfante prencipe degli Apostoli San Pietro gloriosissimo* of 1644 tells us that the arching canopy over the head of Braccelli's bronze *Saint Peter* was likely executed at the behest of a *divoto Spagnolo* in 1625. The canopy was made of opulent red silk decorated with golden stars, with a star-encrusted drapery appended to the wall behind the sculpture.[52] The modern viewer still has a sense of the seventeenth-century appearance of the space today thanks to the similarly colored nineteenth-century red and gold mosaic attached to the wall behind the sculpture, which gives the sensation of a fabric tapestry. The mosaic is accompanied by a painted and gilt wooden canopy above, erected in 1871.[53] The silver oil lamp hanging directly before the head of the *Saint Peter* in Braccelli's print, with its flame curling gently, reflects another popular offering given to cult images, such as the lantern donated to the bronze *Saint Peter* by one Christoforo Benincalsi of Lombardy—again

51. With the basilica oriented westward, the shadows cast to the right indicate the setting sun entering the church from the direction of the apse.

52. "Nel 1625 per maggior honorevolezza vi fù donato da divoto Spagnolo un Baldacchino di seta rossa e stele d'oro, & un panno di dietro dell'istessa foggia, che tuttavia si vede." Francesco Maria Torrigio, *I sacri trofei romani del trionfante prencipe degli apostoli San Pietro gloriosissimo* (Rome, 1644), 159. For the complete description of the site, see Torriggio, *I sacri trofei*, 149–61; also cited in Estelle Lingo, *Mochi's Edge and Bernini's Baroque* (London, 2017), 155.

53. The dedicatory plaque above the modern canopy attributes the commission to Pope Pius IX Ferretti (r. 1846–78), consecrated on May 16, 1871. In addition, the sculptural base changed in 1754 under the direction of Pope Benedict XIV Lambertini (r. 1740–58), removing the family insignia of the fifteenth-century renovator Cardinal Richard Olivier de Longueil (partially visible in the Braccelli print; see n. 31 of this article) for green porphyry slabs. Roser, *St. Peter in Rom*, 243–45, Guarducci, *San Pietro e Sant'Ippolito*, 15. The sculpture's halo is also a later addition, though the exact date of the current version is unknown.

recorded by Torrigio—which was intended to burn in perpetuity before the sculpted image.[54]

Torrigio's text even culminates with a morbid narrative of disrespect and divine justice: a young man working on the construction of Bernini's baldachin reportedly rubbed rancid milk over the foot of the bronze statue to delight in the disgusted reactions of pilgrims who kissed the venerable foot. The young man died violently as punishment for his prank, falling from the baldachin and cracking his scull on the new marble floor of the crossing. The youth's inappropriate touching of the sculpture elicited harsh retribution, and simultaneously provided proof of the saint's agency at the cult center, thereby verifying the power of the cult object.[55] More importantly, the anecdote implies consistent, contemporary tactile devotion within Saint Peter's in the 1620s and 1630s, even while work in the crossing was still underway.

THE TRADITION OF VOTIVES

The medium of sculpture often serves as a devotional aid in sacred spaces. In representations of *beati*, saints, and would-be saints, the pious figure often directs his or her attention to sculpted imagery such as figural crucifixes, as in paintings of Saint Jerome in the wilderness, or of Francis of Sales in private prayer. But early modern renditions of lay veneration in relation to sculpture are rare.[56] Surviving votive tablets—anonymously executed, and with often unidentifiable patrons—may on occasion represent a sculpture as the focal point of prayer that sparks a theophanic vision.[57] Even more tantalizing are those votives in which the theophanic vision assumes the sculptural form itself, which is a subject deserving of more space than the limitations of this article allow.[58] Otherwise, the evidence of interactive adoration of sculpted saints appears more in the wear on the sculptural objects themselves, as discussed earlier in respect to the *Risen Christ* and *Madonna*

54. "Nel 1627 vi fù assegnata l'entrata per una lampada, che vi ardesse di continouo [*sic*] da Christoforo Benincalsi Lombardo, come n'apparisce istromento publico nell'Archivo, donandovi anco una lampada d'argento." Torrigio, *I sacri trofei romani*, 159.

55. Lingo, *Mochi's Edge*, 156; Torrigio, *I sacri trofei romani*, 160–61.

56. A rare example of a portrait of a lay person in private devotion before a small sculpture is Lodovico Carracci's *Widow at Her Devotions*, ca. 1589/90 in the Dayton Art Institute, Ohio, in Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2018), 248.

57. Take, for example, the devotees praying before the *Madonna of Loreto* cult statue in small votive tablets on display in the Museo Lauretano at the church of Sant'Abbondio of Cremona. For other votive imagery, see Fredrika Jacobs, *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 2013).

58. For the debate on iconic versus narrative ex-voto imagery, see Michele Bacci, "Italian Ex-Votos and "Pro-Anima" Images in the Late Middle Ages," in *Ex Voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures*, ed. Ittai Weinryb (New York, 2016), 76–105.

del Parto, than in the gifts left to them. Textual evidence lends little assistance because commentators tended to prioritize ostentatious offerings to a cult site—such as Torrigio's explicit mention of the silver lamp—over the minutiae of small, quasi-mass-produced gifts. Donatello's polychromatic *Crucifixion* in the church of Santa Maria dei Servi in Padua, for example, received a wealth of votives following a fifteen-day miraculous episode when the sculpture purportedly bled in 1512.[59] By 1565 the ex-votos were spilling out from the sculpture's chapel enclosure, and yet little physical evidence of this phenomenon remains.[60] Donatello's *Crucifixion* is not isolated in its devotional erasure: votive tablets and rosaries rarely last in sacred interiors, especially in light of periodic phases of cleansing and decluttering.[61] Tablets, veils, and crutches suffer from their humble materiality because the choice of these gifts stems from what Fredrika Jacobs terms an "aesthetic of purposeful humility."[62] Braccelli highlights that humility with standardized tablet imagery (fig. 1.3), a message that is symbolically reinforced by the central pilgrim's conspicuous gesture of touching his head to the underside of the sculpted foot. The less-opulent gifts generally listed by Torrigio in his *Le sacre grotte vaticane* include wax offerings, painted wax tablets, silver votives, and a 1631 votive plaque mounted directly on the wall of the new basilica beside the bronze *Saint Peter*.[63]

Braccelli's etching signals the extent of what once may have existed on site. While the canopy and votives surrounding the bronze *Saint Peter* have changed or disappeared, the square mosaic crucifixes framed with Barberini bees adorning each pilaster are still visible in the modern setting, projecting over the fluted grooves on raised, flat surfaces, and centered in the pilasters about ten or twelve feet above the ground (notably higher than in their printed reproduction). Around and above

59. Francesco Caglioti, "Donatello miracoloso: Il Crocifisso ligneo dei Servi," in *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Galileiana di scienze lettere ed arti in Padova* (Padua, 2010), 59–85; Andrea Nante and Marica Mercalli, eds., *Donatello svelato: Capolavori a confronto. Il Crocifisso di Santa Maria dei Servi a Padova e il suo restauro* (Venice, 2015).

60. Elisabetta Francescutti in Nante and Mercalli, *Donatello svelato*, 74–75.

61. The interior of the church of the Santissima Annunziata, for example, was periodically purged of its numerous votive offerings. Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli," 278–80. Over 600 effigies populated the church in an inventory of 1630, with at least another 22,000 partial anatomical ex-voto offerings. Didi-Huberman and Moore, "Ex-Voto," 10. Beyond decluttering, Jacobs notes the penchant for recycling devotional material, even reusing painted panels. Fredrika Jacobs, "Humble Offerings: Votive Panel Paintings in Renaissance Italy," in Weinryb, *Ex Voto*, 143–44.

62. Jacobs, "Humble Offerings," 157. Guido Gentile discusses graffiti as another form of humble votive offering at the Sacro Monte di Varallo in "Sulle tracce degli antichi visitatori: percorsi e graffiti," in *Gaudenzio Ferrari: La Crocifissione del Sacro Monte di Varallo*, ed. Elena De Filippis (Turin, 2006), 65–73; cited in Göttler, "The Temptation of the Senses," 406.

63. Torrigio, *Le sacre grotte vaticane*, 127.

these extant mosaic medallions the modern viewer can still pick out small plaster dots appearing on the pilasters, well above the reach of a casual visitor or vandal. Their irregularity in shape, size, and location imply some evolving form of decoration, and thus conceivably affirm where votives once were hung.[64] Fleeting gestures to this devotional practice persist today solely on the internal faces of the pilasters flanking the statue where silver votive hearts are displayed in vertical frames.

The only lingering visual references to the spontaneous gift-giving that once occurred regularly throughout Saint Peter's are those votives incorporated into the design of the column pedestals of Bernini's bronze baldachin (fig. 11) and the pier bases attributed to Francesco Borromini in the side chapel of the Blessed Sacrament (both installed ca. 1630–33).[65] Bernini's and Borromini's simultaneous inclusion of canted medallions and rosary beads in their sculptural compositions gives the impression of casual deposits left behind by avid pilgrims on the bases of these monumental architectural elements. The position of these details, in the zone nearest to the viewer, commemorates the long-standing tradition that these paradoxically permanent ephemera arguably encourage.[66] Much like the wax and panel painted tablets rendered in *The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives*, these scant devotional accretions (to borrow a term from Megan Holmes) reflect the expectation of visitor interaction in the form of votive offerings strewn about the religious interior, tacked onto the walls, strung through open grills, or just left on an obliging pier.[67]

The painted votives to which Braccelli gestures in his composition stand at odds with the new interior, and in so doing they serve a valuable purpose. The oversized pilasters of the new Saint Peter's remind the viewer of the sculpture's newly orchestrated context, in effect dwarfing the votives appended to them. Though this scale difference may signal a demotion, the humble votives actually symbolize the preservation of traditional worship—much like the pilgrims approaching from the direction of the basilica's entrance—in the new, monumental space. These offerings predispose the viewer to contribute personal votive gifts

64. The pristine quality of the mosaic crucifixes and bees implies possible recent restoration or periodic reworking.

65. For the bronze baldachin, see Irving Lavin, *Visible Spirit: The Art of Gianlorenzo Bernini*, vol. 1 (London, 2007), 480–95; for the Borromini pier bases, see Paolo Portoghesi, *Borromini: Architettura come linguaggio* (Milan, 1967), 33; Giuseppe Scarfone, "Ex-voto borrominiani (?) nella Basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano," *Strenna dei Romanisti* 38 (1977): 372–78.

66. The votive additions to the baldachin cluster on the pilasters facing the church apse. Cited in Irving Lavin, *Bernini at Saint Peter's: The Pilgrimage* (London, 2012), 96–105.

67. Holmes, "The Elusive Origins," 115. The concept is also fleshed out extensively in Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*.

Figure 11. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Baldachin*, detail of southeast pedestal and votive medallion of Pope Urban VIII Barberini, 1624–33. (Saskia, Scholar's Resource.)

because the saint's efficacy has already been established by the presence of votive adornment. Through this print the viewer joins the multitude before the sculpted image and is encouraged to contribute his or her own votive and tactile interactions.

PRECEDENTS OF SCULPTURAL REPRESENTATION IN PRINT

The Bronze Saint Peter with Votives mirrors the immersive representation of many ancient and contemporary sculptural compositions in Rome, such as the genre prints included in the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, and in the personal collections of Cassiano dal Pozzo. Genre prints often display a work of art or ancient monument surrounded by contemporary viewers interspersed with vignettes of everyday life.[68] But what sets Braccelli's composition apart from genre prints of ancient or contemporary architecture and sculpture is how the scene is constructed. The viewer stands on the same level as the figures approaching the bronze *Saint Peter*: one's line of sight matches the height of these figures, who acknowledge the viewer's presence by gazing appraisingly out of the scene (note the group of men to the far left, and the various children throughout peering at the viewer). The position is not above and away from the moment represented—as Braccelli rendered Bernini's baldachin—but rather brings the viewer into the scene as another devotee who approaches the early Christian relic in the atmospheric shade of afternoon light.

The rarity of Braccelli's rendition of a cult object in active use at Saint Peter's Basilica begs the question of the print's context in the larger framework of local and international religious representations. This author has yet to find comparable prints of other cult objects receiving devotional touch and votive offerings in a contemporary space.[69] This implies that either Braccelli's composition stems from a less popular form of mass media; or, what is more probable, that this particular visual genre is less likely to survive in modern print collections. Perhaps Braccelli's print was particularly perishable as an image type regularly put on display, like a commemorative image or a devotional *aide memoire* tacked up in lay homes. As Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven argue in their discussion of religious pamphlets, prints manufactured for cult centers could operate as paper

68. Special thanks to Sheila McTighe for her input on the matter of genre imagery and the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*.

69. The closest example encountered by this author is the print of Saint Roche attributed to Titian, which represents the saint in a central frame with votive offerings outside the frame's limits as if referencing a spontaneous offering left by previous viewers. Discussed in Holmes, "Renaissance Perspectives on Classical Antique Votive Practices," in Weinryb, *Ex Voto*, 124–25. Select paintings of devotional sites do exist, but without notable reproduction; for example Josse Lieferinxe's *Pilgrims at the Tomb of Saint Sebastian* of 1497 at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

pilgrimage badges and provided the opportunity for "virtual pilgrimage" for viewers unable to make the journey.[70] Braccelli's etching conceivably represents a larger phenomenon of religious memorabilia, an example of the sort of memento brought home from a pilgrimage to Rome. The humble archetype on the page visually represents the pilgrim's journey, while the unimpeded, central representation of the sculpture provides a devotional locus unto itself.

The tactile and votive interactions implicit in this sort of image predispose the etched print to disappear over time, whether as a result of light exposure or natural decay, or by virtue of its own tactile tradition irreparably degrading the printed surface.[71] Roberto Cobianchi and David Areford have already established that woodblock and later engraved prints played highly interactive roles in early modern devotional practice.[72] The Braccelli print is therefore a rare survivor of a much larger phenomenon of prints as souvenirs doubling as devotional objects, the image gaining in its own cultic status through the compelling re-presentation of the original object: the etching shares the bronze *Saint Peter* "in diverse Parts of the World" for acts of personal contemplation. Like the votives appended to the flanking pilasters, the etching reenacts traditional practices in a modern context. In this sense, Braccelli's religious scene is a pendant composition to his artwork replicas, similarly made as mementoes of a renowned sculptural object, but with the added element of framing and presenting popular acts of faith. Over time, early modern prints have come to be valued by collectors for their artistic merit rather than for their efficacy as aides of devotion. This lack of a sustained market for devotional souvenirs like the Braccelli etching and others similar to it, coupled with Braccelli's reputation as a relatively minor artist of the period, have contributed to the print's obscurity today.

Without other comparable etchings of contemporary scenes of devotional foci, the next closest parallel are images of statuary, which Braccelli also produced, such

70. "These works were the ultimate portable product, intended to be carried long distances by pilgrims on their way back home after a visit to the Holy House, almost like a paper form of pilgrim badge, or a packaged 'virtual pilgrimage' on paper for use by the family back home." Brundin, Howard, and Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*, 237.

71. Consider the tradition of touch echoed in older sacred images like Christ's side wound in illuminated manuscripts. Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 197–208. Michael Milway discusses the phenomenon of print's destruction via over-use in "Forgotten Best-Sellers from the Dawn of the Reformation," in *Continuity and Change: The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History; Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Robert Bast and Andrew C. Gow (Leiden, 2000), 113–14.

72. Roberto Cobianchi, "The Use of Woodcuts in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Print Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2006): 47–54, 50–54. David Areford discusses the replicable measurements of print—particularly Christ's side wound—and the printed page as an apotropaic amulet. See David Areford, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe* (Burlington, VT, 2010), 243–47. See also Michael Bury, *The Print in Italy, 1550–1620* (London, 2001).

as the *Veronica* and *Leo the Great before Attila*. These compositions, which depict already existing works of art, prioritize the original artist-creator in an accompanying inscription. Representations such as these emphasize the prestige of the artist through the attentive act of copying and can further augment the composition by transposing the works of art into immersive contextual scenes. Take, for example, Antonio Salamanca's 1547 print of Michelangelo's Vatican *Pietà* (fig. 12), where Salamanca acknowledges the "angelic" artist working with "divine" stone, a recurring statement found in other prints of the same composition.[73] Rather than focus on the sculpture's display inside Saint Peter's Basilica, or contemporary interactions with it, the etcher isolates the sculptural group in a crumbling, barrel-vaulted interior, connoting an ancient or early Christian past for the modern work of art.[74] The sculpture is simultaneously modern and ancient in this context, with Salamanca insinuating an intrinsic, atemporal value to Michelangelo's conception.[75] The trend continues in subsequent prints of the same composition, including the 1566 printed replica by Adamo Scultori, and Agostino Carraci's 1579 version.[76] In both, Michelangelo's sculpture appears in a classicizing setting tempered with narrative details evocative of the lamentation beside Christ's tomb.[77]

These two-dimensional scenes of the *Pietà* present the sculpture as both an honored modern artwork and as an early Christian devotional scene, reconfiguring the composition into a meditative locus for the viewer's own private space. Braccelli's *Bronze Saint Peter with Votives* inverts this premise by offering a purportedly early Christian object in a modern setting. Like the *Pietà*, the bronze sculpture of *Saint*

73. The Salamanca inscription reads in full: "MICHELANGELUS BONAROTUS FLORENT. DIVI PETRI IN VATICANO EX UNO LAPIDE MATREM AC FILIUM DIVINE FECIT / ANTONIUS SALAMANCA QUOD POTUIT IMITATUS EXCULPSIT 1547."

74. One of the rare prints possibly detailing Michelangelo's *Pietà* in its display at the Vatican is Jacques Callot's version from 1607–11 for the *Delineationes picturae altarium in Ecclesiis S. Petri et S. Pauli Romae*. The sculpture and crucifixion behind it appear in isolation without ephemera or devotees, and thus functions much like the Salamanca print. Barnes argues that the Vatican display may be alluded to as early as Bonasone's mid-sixteenth-century version, which showcases the *Pietà* before an empty cross, but located in a fictive landscape, again folding biblical narrative details into the scene. Bernardine Barnes, *Michelangelo in Print: Reproductions as Response in the Sixteenth Century* (Burlington, VT, 2010), 149. For more on the Callot version, see Jurkowlaniec, "A Miracle of Art," 188.

75. Barnes, *Michelangelo in Print*, 145–65.

76. Adamo Scultori was identified in Bartsch and others as Adamo Ghisi. Adam von Bartsch, *Italian Masters of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 39, ed. Babette Bohn (New York, 1995), 23 n. 14; Paolo Bellini, *L'opera incisa di Adamo e Diana Scultori* (Vicenza, 1991), 115 n. 100.

77. Michelangelo's *Pietà*, of course, is an exceptional example, as the only contemporary representation of the Virgin and Christ at the Vatican to receive a crown by the Chapter of Saint Peter's on the feast day of the Assumption, August 15, 1637, thereby promoting the sculpture as a miraculous image. The Vatican notations regarding the receipt of this honor were signed coincidentally by Canon Ugo Ubaldini. Jurkowlaniec, "A Miracle of Art," 175–76. For a transcription of the document signed by Ubaldini, see app. 1 of Jurkowlaniec's article (on p. 15).

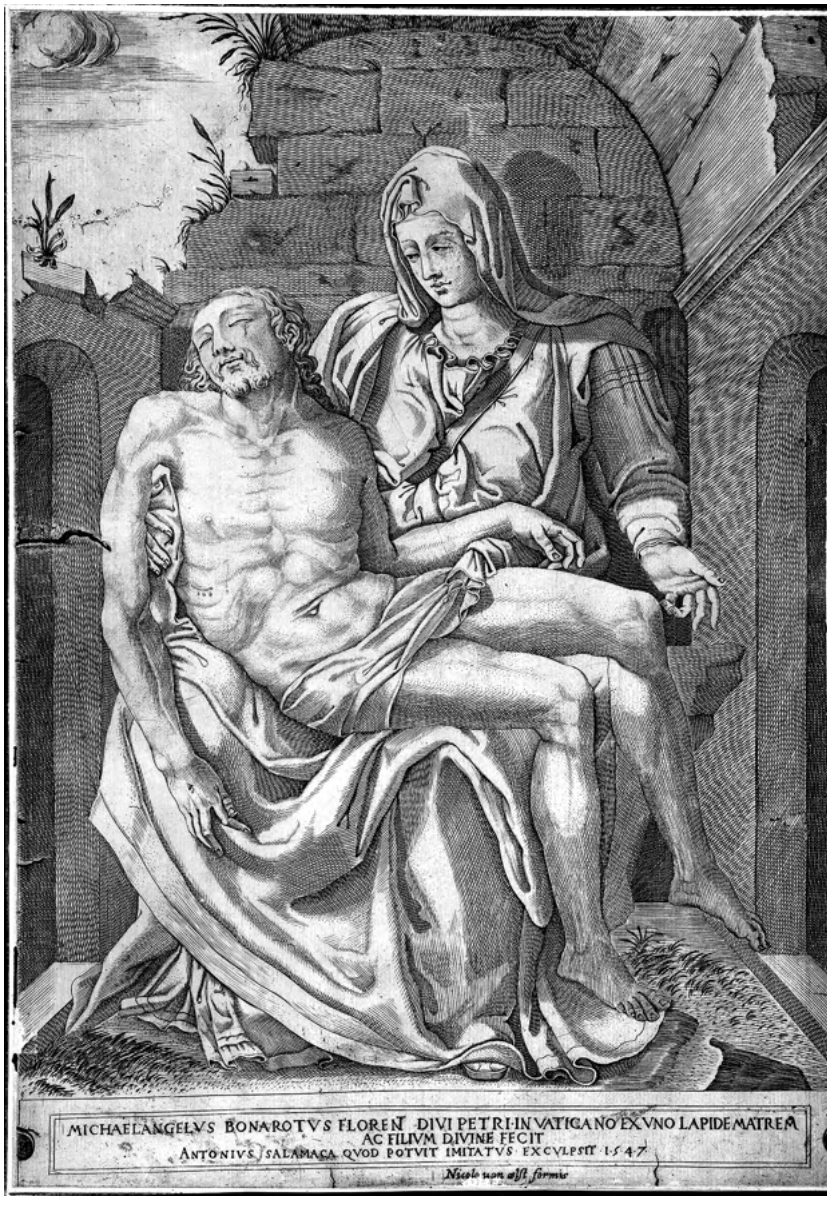

Figure 12. Antonio Salamanca, *Michelangelus Buonarotus Floren. Divi Petri in Vaticano ex Uno Lapide Matrem ac Filium Divine Fecit*, Rome, 1547. Engraving, 37.5 × 26.3 cm. (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, USA.)

Peter connects intently with the viewer through its direct visible access but predisposes the viewer to participate in acts of devotion through the presence of lay devotees and votives. The miraculous object appears to us not in a fictional location but in a characteristically modern interior, with an inscription locating us in the Vatican where the sculpture is "revered by all." With this print, early modern viewers not only possessed the image of the bronze statue but also perceived the object itself touched and experienced by their proxy on the page, the contemporary pilgrim. Braccelli's end result models the desired sort of interaction between viewer and statue while providing a two-dimensional replica of the object of devotion that might substitute for the original as a locus of prayer for the faithful.

Giovanni Battista Braccelli's composition is a rare example of the devotional ephemera that revolved around the bronze *Saint Peter*. A later representation detailing similar interactions with the sculpture dates from over a century later in 1763, a drawing in pen and ink with watercolor highlights by Hubert Robert (1733–1808) now in the Albertina collection, simply called *Saint Peter Adored* (fig. 13).[78] From the viewer's angled perspective, the artist must have stood in the crossing to observe the group from a distance, separating himself from the scene. Pilgrims and a Swiss guard stand, kneel, and prostrate themselves before the sculpted image, while a veiled pregnant woman tilts her head upward to kiss the bronze foot. Against the pilaster to the left of the cult statue, a seated woman accepts alms from a young man with his back to the viewer, while groups of women and children on the far-right side of the composition bow their heads or kneel before the *Saint Peter*. Though the mix of high and low, male and female devotees remains a constant from Braccelli to Robert, the votives flanking the sacred sculpture in the latter composition have all disappeared.[79] The grey pilasters provide a stoic frame for the bronze *Saint Peter*; however, the conspicuous omission of the mosaic crosses with Barberini bees, in addition to the lost devotional regalia, may signal the artist's selective erasure of seemingly unsightly detail to prioritize the more classical hallmarks of the setting.[80]

78. Mentioned in Guarducci, *San Pietro e Sant'Ippolito*, 17. Robert's representation of the bronze *Saint Peter* also appears in the Vatican journal publication "Una miracolosa guarigione presso la statua di San Pietro," *La Basilica di S. Pietro* 25 (2013): 2–3.

79. Something similar appears in Giovanni Battista Piranesi's (1720–78) etching *Veduta interna della Basilica di S. Pietro vicino alla Tribuna* of 1773, wherein a small devotee touches and kisses the foot of the bronze *Saint Peter*, again *in situ* without devotional accoutrement. Special thanks to Chiara Franceschini for bringing this example to my attention.

80. This selective rendering is also reflected in the architectural details highlighted in the composition, some changes to the sculptural compositions in the background, and the omission of the richly colored revetment (real and fictive) in the adjacent pier.

Robert's *Saint Peter* transforms the saint, with one hand raised in a gesture of blessing, into a benevolent emperor offering clemency from his throne.[81]

CONCLUSION

Giovanni Battista Braccelli's focus on the bronze *Saint Peter*, its setting, and the behavior of its devotees speaks to the artist's intention to give equal weight to the cult object and acts of local devotion. Much like the carved votives invested into the baldachin and chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, Braccelli's image models continuous, appropriate interactions in terms of touch and votive gift-giving within the new basilica, while simultaneously implanting the tradition into the new space. Although Saint Peter's changed dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Braccelli's print assures us that cult operations continued unabated, accommodating as necessary the evolving construction. The potent site of the bronze statue to the right side of the nave and just before the crossing, combined with its status as a conduit and touchstone in the Vatican complex, locates seventeenth-century worshippers in the dramatically altered new basilica. The gifts of wax and panel votives, crutches and veils, and honorific tapestries and lanterns continued to arrive throughout and after the demolition of the old church.

Today, visitors to Saint Peter's do not sense the deeply rooted connection with the destroyed Constantinian church that still lingered for seventeenth-century devotees, but Braccelli's etching allows us to experience the ephemeral traditions that helped bridge the spatial valley between the successive structures on site. The etching promotes adoration to "diverse Parts of the World," assuring a constancy of ritual interaction in an otherwise unrecognizable interior. Braccelli's central pilgrim bows his head to connect physically with the cult object, as similarly dressed pilgrims have done for centuries. The surrounding signs of successful cultic interaction in the form of votives, pilgrim presence, and pious touch legitimize the virtual locus to early modern eyes. Rather than a modern work of art pushed into the past, the presumed ancient object grounds the present. But for the silver votive hearts safely locked in their unobtrusive lateral display cases, little survives today to connect modern viewers with the rich votive past. Yet, like the gestural votive panels etched into the surface of the engraved copper plate itself, the worn marks across the bronze *Saint Peter* still offer a stark reminder of what was once a vibrant site of devotion.

81. Philippe Morel, *J. H. Fragonard e H. Robert a Roma* (Rome, 1990), 187–88.