



7 Filippo Vitale, *Guardian Angel*, circa 1612–13. Oil on canvas, 340 × 210 cm. Chiesa della Pietà dei Turchini, Naples

idealized version of Neapolitan Caravaggism, in tune with the emerging Neapolitan interest in Roman and Bolognese classicizing artists (fig. 8). But as with so much else in Neapolitan artistic practice, this step in their careers was also predetermined on the basis of long-standing personal affiliations. Stanzione had links back both to Gaspare de Popolo and to Caterina de Mauro's two brothers (and Gaspare de Popolo's brothers-in-law), Marcello and Cesare de Mauro. In 1615, six years before Diana de Rosa's and Agostino Beltrano's employment with De Popolo, he had already consented to act as godfather to Gaspare's and Isabella de Popolo née Mauro's first son. In 1620 and 1640 he also acted as godfather to Marcello and Cesare de Mauro's two sons. With this he thus became godfather not only to his two assistants' first master's son, but also to their two cousins!

Through all this dense interlinking of the personal with the professional, the arrangement of marriages and the sometimes extremely complicated negotiations regarding dowries were regarded as pivotal and taken very seriously indeed. Orsola Vitale's dowry, for example, was the subject of seven years' protracted negotiations between Filippo Vitale and his relatives, on the one side, and the groom, Aniello Falcone, on the other. The negotiations involved Falcone and Vitale in drawing up a secret *albarano* on 1 May 1639 to replace the *capitoli matrimoniali* that were to be published the following day.<sup>30</sup>

The problems that could befall such negotiations also meant that arranged marriages could give rise to significant artistic tension. They certainly seem to have contributed to the breakdown of relations between the Carthusians of the Certosa di San Martino, then the city's most important public patrons of art, and the artist temporarily resident from Rome, Giovanni Lanfranco. In 1637 the Carthusians commissioned Lanfranco to produce a series of frescoes in the nave and presbytery of their church. The parties soon fell out, however, mainly over disagreements concerning Lanfranco's payments – a problem also experienced by many of the other artists employed by the Carthusians, as will be seen. Further exacerbating the situation, though, were issues of a more personal kind. In 1639 Lanfranco complained to his Roman patron that the monks of the Certosa were now ill disposed towards him because they had sided against his intentions by preferring to follow instead the wishes of a local architect and sculptor, Cosimo Fanzago. Fanzago was then the architect of the Certosa and he was also at that stage the city's most pre-eminent and influential artist-entrepreneur. Fanzago and the Carthusians wanted his son to marry Lanfranco's daughter, but Lanfranco had other ideas. He considered Fanzago's son to be 'troppo inferiore' and, in a decision that speaks volumes regarding his desire not to allow himself to become inextricably enmeshed within the local scene, had arranged instead to marry his daughter to the sculptor Giuliano Finelli, like him a foreigner who had also migrated from Rome to work in Naples.<sup>31</sup>

Although rarely commented on in the modern literature, the early eighteenth-century biographer Bernardo de' Dominici seems, therefore, to have been closer to the mark when he linked this marriage dispute with the eventual severing of Lanfranco's relations with the Carthusians via the flashpoint of a failed artistic commission.<sup>32</sup> This dis-



9 Giovanni Lanfranco, with subsequent additions by Luca Giordano, *Virgin and Child with Ss Dominic and Januarius* (originally *St Anselm of Canterbury and St Hugh of Lincoln*), circa 1638–44. Oil on canvas, 300 × 250 cm. Certosa di San Martino, Naples, on deposit from the Chiesa del Rosario, Afragola

puted commission was for one of Lanfranco's only Neapolitan altarpieces. No sooner was this completed than the Carthusians rejected it. Lanfranco's response was to make a statement of clannish allegiance: he repainted the saints in the altarpiece and donated it to the church of his 'own' nation, Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, the previously mentioned church in the heart of the artists' quarter, and one that contained important altarpieces by Caravaggio as well as by the local Caravaggesque practitioners Carlo Sellitto, Filippo Vitale and Caracciolo (fig. 9).<sup>33</sup>

Although accordingly Lanfranco may have exacerbated his problems with one of the city's most powerful artistic players and most important religious patrons, his desire to choose a groom for his daughter may nonetheless be considered sound, at least in professional and artistic terms. All that is heard of Fanzago's son, as it transpires, is his involvement in

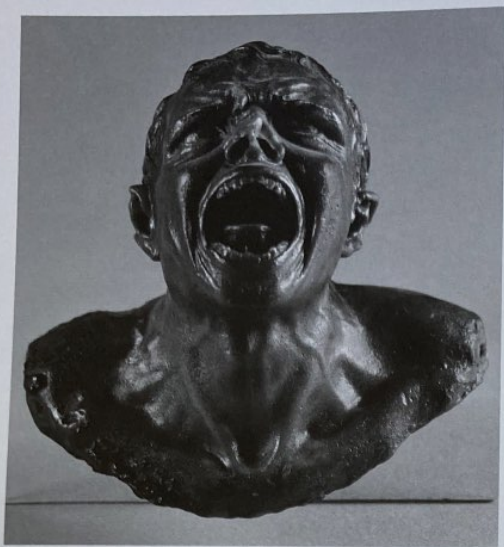
a brawl later in the century. Finelli, on the other hand, went on to become one of the leading Neapolitan sculptors of his day.<sup>34</sup> It was no doubt owing to his success that Finelli and his wife chose not to accompany Lanfranco in 1646 when he tired of the Neapolitan scene and elected to return to Rome for the final years of his career. They too, nonetheless, eventually succumbed to the expatriate's sense of displacement, and ultimately migrated back to Rome in 1651, only two years, as it transpired, prior to Finelli's death.

#### ARTISTS AS ARTISANS AND ARTISANS AS ARTISTS

Within such an interlinked artistic milieu, it was natural for early seventeenth-century Neapolitan painters to form close and long-standing professional and familial associations with artisans, particularly gilders and carpenters. These contacts can be seen frequently to have gone much deeper than the business dealings recorded in documents. A number of the more important Neapolitan painters of the seventeenth century were themselves sons of gilders. Filippo Vitale's father and two uncles were all gilders, for example, as was Carlo Sellitto's father, and so too was Agostino Beltrano's father, together with the father of Filippo Vitale's son-in-law, Aniello Falcone, who was also during the 1630s and 1640s one of the city's leading interpreters of contemporary trends in Roman and Bolognese classicism.<sup>35</sup>

Given that they lived in close proximity to each other, often worked together, and were commonly linked by long-standing family connections, it should thus also come as no surprise to find that a number of Neapolitan painters and artisans often shared work space. In the years prior to his marriage to Caterina de Mauro, for example, Tommaso de Rosa shared a workshop with the little-known painter and sometime gilder Giovanni Geronimo de Arena and with his brother, Matteo de Arena, who confined himself to gilding.<sup>36</sup> Sebastiano Sellitto's workshop was also close by, on Via Monteoliveto opposite the Palazzo Gravina. It bordered the workshop of the master carpenter Giovan Battista Vigliante (who is elsewhere documented carving a frame for one of Santafede's altarpieces).<sup>37</sup> When the occasion required, Sellitto collaborated with his neighbour Vigliante in the same way that Tramontano's disgruntled gilders shared their commission with Paolo Cimino.<sup>38</sup>

Within this environment of close working proximity it is also not uncommon to encounter artists and artisans swapping roles more fundamentally. Carlo Sellitto's father,



10 Giovanni Bernardino Azzolino, *Damned Soul*, 1610s–1620s. Polychrome wax, height 7 cm. Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples

Sebastiano, for example, is recorded in the documents as a 'pittore e indoratore'. This dual specialization enabled him to accept a commission to paint an altarpiece, in one instance, and then to gild one of Santafede's altarpieces, in another.<sup>39</sup> Giovanni Geronimo de Arena, for whom only one documented work exists, *St Charles Borromeo in Prayer* for the monastery of Monteoliveto,<sup>40</sup> is also documented earlier in his career as a gilder.<sup>41</sup> In the 1630s Aniello Falcone's colleague in his early life drawing academy, Honofrio Masturzo, was also both a gilder and painter, as were a number of Falcone's relatives.<sup>42</sup>

Just as there was no clear line drawn between artist and artisan, so too it was not unusual to find painters commonly undertaking work that today might be characterized anachronistically as artisanal, decorative, or somehow secondary to their major works. Besides painting altarpieces and gilding frames, Sebastiano Sellitto accordingly undertook, in 1584, to gild for the marchese di Laura a *travacca* (bed with baldacchino), 'excepting the little *putti* for which he will have to paint the skin tones'.<sup>43</sup> He was also happy to turn his hand to gilding a carriage when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>44</sup> In addition to his regular output as one of the leading early seventeenth-century specialists in altar-

pieces and devotional paintings, Loys Croys similarly painted coats of arms on standards and book miniatures.<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Bernardino Azzolino, Ribera's father-in-law and a highly regarded artist in his own right,<sup>46</sup> practised both as a painter and as a sculptor. His speciality appears to have been painted wax, stucco and relief sculpture (fig. 10).<sup>47</sup> In 1614, for example, he was paid for a relief sculpture of a *Crucifixion* and, in 1619, for 'tutta la pittura fatta a stucco' (all the painting made in stucco) for the Casa Professa of the Gesù.<sup>48</sup> Other commissions are known from the 1620s and 1640s.<sup>49</sup> Even the brilliant, albeit somewhat enigmatic, painter Giovanni Battista Spinelli seems to have worked on artisanal commissions on occasion. In 1607, for example, Lanfranco Massa paid him, perhaps on behalf of his master, Marcantonio Doria of Genoa, to make 150 gold rosaries.<sup>50</sup>

Artists combined their painting practices with these kinds of activities for the good reason that they wished to maintain viable and flourishing businesses. One should not, therefore, make the mistake of considering their works in these formats as being necessarily 'minor' in the sense of their being only small or cheap adjuncts to their careers. This is particularly clear for an artist like Onofrio de Leone, who was active during the 1630s and 1640s. In the early eighteenth century Bernardo de' Dominici dismissed this one-time assistant to Corenzio, and brother to the rather better-known battle painter Andrea de Leone, as 'not a painter of great worth'.<sup>51</sup> More recent analyses have not fundamentally challenged this interpretation (fig. 11).<sup>52</sup> But Onofrio de Leone was nonetheless proficient enough to be able to receive significant amounts of money for his creations.

In 1644, in fact, he is documented receiving no fewer than 612 ducats for his work. This constituted a princely sum, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. It was equivalent, for example, to three major gallery paintings by Ribera, Stanzione or any of the other leading figure painters of the day. De Leone's work, however, was for an altogether less 'princely' kind of product. He was, in actuality, paid for producing painted fans for export to Spain, and he must have made them in industrial quantities to command such fees. In 1643 he was paid 33.6 ducats for producing twenty-eight painted fans at a rate of 7 *carlini* (10 *carlini* making up a ducat) for each fan completed. On this basis, then, he would have had to produce no fewer than 800 fans to receive his payment in the next year.<sup>53</sup> Although there is no further documentation for this activity, one wonders, therefore, whether he might have subcontracted this work and thus have been receiving the money in his capacity as head of a workshop specializing in this kind of product.



11 Onofrio de Leone, *St Januarius Emerging Unscathed from the Furnace*, circa 1642–5. Oil on canvas, 83 × 126 cm. Quadreria dei Girolamini, Naples

#### THE STATUS OF NEAPOLITAN PAINTING

When the clerk of the Vatican's Apostolic Chamber wrote in 1601 that 'Painting is a most noble profession, quite different from the mechanical crafts', he was restating a by then venerable central Italian tradition that identified painters as practitioners of a liberal art.<sup>54</sup> The line between artist and artisan, by contrast, was by no means as clearly drawn in early seventeenth-century Naples, as has been seen.

In addition to his workshop in Via Monteoliveto, Sebastiano Sellitto owned a residence at nearby Santa Maria Donalbina. This indicates his attainment of an unusual degree of success and wealth. Fabrizio Santafede's much higher level of social and economic attainment is indicated by his collection of antiquities, which was said to be comparable in quality to those of the leading Neapolitan aristocratic collectors and antiquarians of the early seventeenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Santafede was very much the exception to the rule. His level of success and social advancement must have appeared

spectacular compared to the vast majority of Neapolitan painters. Sellitto may have been fortunate enough to live separately from his work, but the plan of his workshop was in essence no different from that of any other Neapolitan artisan. Documents describe his workshop as 'consistente in una bottega con cantina e formale, e quattro appartamenti superiori' (consisting of a workshop with a cellar and formal area, and four rooms above). Such workshops were typical in Naples and are still to be seen there today. Although it does not specify the number of rooms, a document from his later years shows that Giovanni Battista Caracciolo lived and worked in quarters with essentially the same plan.<sup>56</sup>

Successful painters such as Sebastiano Sellitto could aspire to a marginally higher level of social and economic status than that of their craftsmen collaborators. Painters such as Decio Tramontano could further be addressed by the title *magnifico* rather than *maestro* used for artisans. Yet they remained locked into procedures that were little different from those of the artisans with whom they remained closely



12 Filippo Vitale (and Pacecco de Rosa?), *Virgin and Child with Sts Dominic and Charles Borromeo*, 1640s. Oil on canvas, 200 x 170 cm. San Domenico Maggiore, Naples

associated. When Sebastiano Sellitto accepted the commission to gild and paint a bed with a baldacchino, he placed himself on the same level as the *trabaccari* whose workshops were concentrated not far distant from his in the Vicolo di San Giacomo. Gennaro Monte, one of the most successful silversmiths of the day, also lived in that street.<sup>57</sup>

The deep-seated connections between painting and the decorative arts were further formalized by the Neapolitan painters' professional association. Since 1521 painters had been grouped with gilders, playing card decorators, miniaturists and *rotellari* (either wheelwrights or painters of wheels)<sup>58</sup> in an association called the *Corporazione dei Pittori*. (Carpenters and other woodcarvers formed part of a separate guild, the *Corporazione degli Scultori e Marmorari*.)<sup>59</sup> This professional link between painters and gilders remained in place until 1650, when the demolition and restructuring of the *Corporazione's* oratory occasioned the gilders to strike out on their own. The *Corporazione* was then eventually reformed in 1664 as the *Congregazione*

dei Pittori. It included the first 'public' Neapolitan life drawing academy and had the expressed aim (as related by De' Dominici in the early eighteenth century) of reinforcing the status of painting as 'la professione nobilissima' (a most noble profession).<sup>60</sup> Prior to this, and particularly during the first half of the seventeenth century, there was no such clear division between painting and the so-called decorative arts.

Neapolitan painters – and their colleagues in the related trades – were thus literally parochial, literally ghettoized and very tribal. They operated in a close-knit world that created strong links, together with efficient and closely related workshops. They also made it their business to look after their own. When viewing a late altarpiece by Filippo Vitale dating from the 1640s, for example, the observer may be struck by a certain stylistic disjunction that seems especially evident in the contrast between the harshly flattened *chiaroscuro* and gnarled, unidealized treatment of the face of St Charles Borromeo and the softer, lighter and more idealized treatment of the face of St Dominic (fig. 12). Here two divergent stylistic approaches appear to have been laid side by side – the one relatively harsh and unconstrainedly referring back to an earlier tradition of Neapolitan Caravaggesque realism, and the second containing the lessons of the more idealizing traditions of Stanzi-one and his ambience.

One answer to this stylistic conundrum – and one that has been reasonably proposed by Nicola Spinosa, Ferdinando Bologna and Stefano Causa – is that here the aged Vitale brought in his younger stepson Pacecco de Rosa to assist with the work.<sup>61</sup> If this were the case, then Vitale and De Rosa would only have been following the deep-set inclinations towards which all the interconnected relationships here outlined were directed. De Rosa was acting, in other words, in a similar way to that in which his uncle, Marcello de Mauro, had decades earlier stepped in to help complete the commissions already begun by his father, Tommaso de Rosa, following the latter's death.<sup>62</sup> Or how Filippo Vitale had himself stepped in to help complete work commenced by his earlier master, Carlo Sellitto, following Sellitto's premature death aged in his early thirties in 1614.<sup>63</sup>

This bedrock of physical proximity, inter-generational affiliation and artist to artisan linkage has significant implications for Neapolitan Baroque painting. It encouraged continuity and traditionalism even in a period of dynamic artistic change. It also enabled the development of interlocking constellations of tightly run and enormously productive artistic workshops. These workshops could be harshly resist-

ant to the presence of outsiders, particularly when it came to famous Roman and Bolognese painters tempted to Naples by the lure of prestigious and well-paying commissions. Yet these artists could also be accommodating to those foreigners flexible enough to mould their practices and specializations to match the types of work that were not

already so intensively covered – and coveted – by local artists and their cohorts. In so doing, though, the foreigners also learned to adapt their production to suit local exigencies. All this was undertaken within the dynamic field of Neapolitan workshop production, an area that will now be examined more directly.