Fig. 1. Anna Morandi Manzolini, Self-Portrait, eighteenth century. Wax and mixed media. Inv. n. CECOMA 153, Museo di Palazzo Poggi – Bologna. © Opificio delle pietre Dure di Firenze. Photo credit: Giacinto Cambini. (Plate 1, p. 353)
Proudly resplendent in her elegant, lace-embellished, rose-coloured dress and sumptuous jewels and pearls, Anna Morandi Manzolini (1714/1716–1774) is comfortable with dead flesh (Fig. 1). Her serene expression and delicate hand gestures belie the gruesome task at hand: the dissection of a human cranium. She peels back a layer of hair-covered skin with her forceps and points with a scalpel (now lost) to the meninges, or the three membranes that line the skull and vertebral canal and enclose the brain and spinal cord, without a glance at the manual task she performs. Morandi gazes confidently at her audience, nonchalantly revealing the locus of human cognition and imagination. Despite her real clothes, human hair, and lifelike appearance, Anna Morandi Manzolini has created herself in wax.

By creating a self-portrait in such an unstable medium, Morandi forced viewers to contend with a truly composite figure of the artist-anatomist. The fluidity of wax, which can shift infinitely between solid and liquid states, parallels the nature of Morandi’s professional identity as an artist and anatomist. Indeed, in her lifetime, Morandi was considered an excellent sculptor and anatomist, her perceived professional identity unfixed. The Marchese Angelelli wondered whether Morandi was to be remembered as an ‘excellent sculptor or a learned anatomist’, concluding that she succeeded in both. In his 1777 oration De Manzoliniana supellectili (‘On Manzolini’s Preparations’), Luigi Galvani attributed Morandi’s authority as an anatomist to her abilities as a sculptor, arguing that her models would never become obsolete because they ‘perfectly imitated nature’. Despite the accolades she received in her lifetime and shortly after her death, only recently have scholars focused on Morandi and her work, with Lucia Dacome, Miriam Focaccia, and Rebecca Messbarger...
cogently reconstructing her biography and assigning Morandi a critical place in Bologna’s eighteenth-century intellectual milieu. Many scholars, however, interpret Morandi’s self-portrait as primarily an assertion of her mastery of dissection and anatomical science, often understating the importance of her formal training as a painter, draughtsman, and sculptor.

In this chapter, I situate the artist-anatomist in the tradition of female self-portraiture and the city’s celebration of female achievement in the arts and sciences, positing that Morandi’s status as a Bolognese woman artist enhanced her prestige in the world of anatomical ceroplastics. Furthermore, I contend that Morandi’s wax portraits of herself and her husband engage Bologna’s collective promotion of its native artistic heritage, embodied in the luminous naturalism of the Carracci school and its followers. Bologna’s commitment to and pride in expounding naturalism derives from the practice of careful observation and study that developed at the city’s ancient university over its centuries-long history, and such context should not be underestimated when considering Morandi’s works. Her waxes, I contend, problematise the polemic of anatomical knowledge in the local arts establishment. I argue that Morandi’s self-portrait embodies the sculptor’s intellectual authority as an anatomist and artist through visual references to Bologna’s exemplary holy women and women artists. By signalling her membership to these various social and professional groups, the self-portrait empowers Morandi to transcend the boundaries between them and to fashion a singular identity for herself as a totalising symbol of civic excellence.

Fig. 2. Anna Morandi Manzolini, Bust of Giovanni Manzolini, eighteenth century. Wax and mixed media. Inv. n. CECOMA 154, Museo di Palazzo Poggi – Bologna; © Università di Bologna – Sistema Museale di Ateneo. Photo credit: Fulvio Simoni. (Plate 2, p. 354)
Bologna: ‘Mistress of Sciences and of Studies’

Born in Bologna in 1714 or 1716, Morandi was raised by her mother in meagre circumstances and supported by one of Bologna’s charitable organisations that aided underprivileged women.\(^7\) She studied drawing and sculpture under local artists Giuseppe Pedretti and Francesco Monti, in whose studio she met Giovanni Manzolini (1700–1755) (Fig. 2).\(^8\) The coupled married in November 1740 and, after Manzolini took a position in the studio of anatomical ceroplastician Ercole Lelli, Morandi began her own foray into anatomical science, deploying her training as a sculptor to assist her husband when he left Lelli’s studio in 1746. After Manzolini’s untimely death in 1755, the widow and single mother continued to operate their studio and display their preparations in their home. That same year, Pope Benedict XIV granted Morandi an annual stipend of 300 lire to lecture on human anatomy at Bologna’s university. Finally, Morandi had assumed her place in Bologna’s intellectual elite.

Morandi nurtured her artistic and scientific talents largely due to Bologna’s long-standing status as a hub of intellectual pursuits. Home to an ancient university,\(^9\) Bologna’s various academic institutes and arts academies enhanced its status as ‘mistress of sciences and of studies.’\(^10\) Such extra-university institutions as Ulisse Aldrovandi’s (1522–1605) collection of naturalia and Ferdinando Cospì’s (1606–1683) collection of artificialia were designed to supplement the university’s curricula, which, by the eighteenth century, were primarily theoretical and taught orally rather than through experimentation and practical teaching.\(^11\)

Bologna’s variety of educational resources fostered a spirit of collaboration between artists and scientists, men and women. Bolognese women artists worked from the collections of Aldrovandi and Cospì: the painter Lavinia Fontana studied Aldrovandi’s collection of botanical and zoological specimens, and the engraver Veronica Fontana illustrated the catalogue for the Museo Cospiano, a cabinet of curiosities containing natural specimens (including human-made, fictitious creatures from natural specimens, such as winged fish), archaeological artefacts, and arts and arms from the Ottoman world.\(^12\) While other women engaged in scientific illustration abroad,\(^13\) Bologna’s tradition of supporting women who participated in intellectual pursuits enabled Morandi to fuse her anatomical talents with her artistic abilities in her double portrait.\(^14\)

By Morandi’s lifetime, the trope of the learned Bolognese woman was a source of pride, an embodiment of the city’s cultural vibrancy and robust networks of intellectual exchange.\(^15\) Beginning in the sixteenth century, a number of male Bolognese authors composed laude, or verses praising extraordinary female abilities. Giulio Cesare Croce in 1590 claimed that ‘illustrious and intelligent women have contributed to Felsina’s fame and goodness and as the names of these women are inscribed in history, so is the name of Bologna.’\(^16\) The Tuscan Giorgio Vasari included a vita of the sculptor Properzia de’ Rossi in his Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a’
tempi nostril (‘Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects’) (1550) (Fig. 3), one of just four entries dedicated to women and the only one mentioning a female sculptor. The unflattering nature of much of her vita notwithstanding, Properzia’s inclusion in a book featuring the most prominent artists of the Renaissance is not to be underestimated, particularly because Bolognese artists enjoy minimal representation in Vasari’s text. In 1678, the Bolognese scholar and art historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia commended the accomplishments of Bolognese women artists, who

followed the trail of their progenitors and, as Vasari said [...] were not ashamed [...] to place themselves with tender and palest white hands at tasks of dynamism; and through the roughness of marble and the harshness of iron, to chase after their desires, and bring back with them fame.17

Thus, positive attitudes towards Bolognese women artists were well established before Morandi’s lifetime.

In the eighteenth century, Pope Benedict XIV fostered the interpenetration of university scholarship and independent intellectual inquiry, often driven by the work of individual collectors. Since the medieval physician Mondino de’ Liuzzi first performed public dissections in the thirteenth century, Bologna had served as a locus of anatomical study. In 1711, Luigi Ferdinando Marsili (1658–1730) oversaw the merger of the city’s fine art academy, the Accademia Clementina, with the nascent Istituto delle Scienze e Arti Liberali to form the

Fig. 3: Cristoforo Chrieger after drawing by Giorgio Vasari, Properzia de’ Rossi, 1791 [–1795]. Woodcut. From Le Vite De’ Piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, E Architettori for Niccolò Pagni e Giuseppe Bardi (Florence, 1568), 171. Royal Academy, London.
A woman of supreme goodness, and a singular talent

Accademia delle Scienze dell’Istituto di Bologna, a place where artists and scientists could carry out experimental research side by side.

A citizen of Bologna, Cardinal Prospero Lambertini ascended to the papacy in 1740, becoming Pope Benedict XIV, and he enthusiastically nurtured Bologna’s intellectual culture before and after taking St. Peter’s throne (Fig. 4). Bologna’s status as the northern gateway to the Papal States allowed Lambertini to cultivate his identity as enlightened and dominant over all things natural and spiritual. At the fore of this plan was the creation of an anatomy museum at the Institute of Bologna, intended to supplement anatomical instruction for medical students at the university. In 1742, Lamberti hired Ercole Lelli, a professor of figure drawing at the Accademia Clementina, to create the first anatomical wax models (Fig. 5). Lelli initially engaged Manzolini to assist with the commission, but Manzolini left the studio in 1745 due to what he felt was a lack of acknowledgement of his contributions to the project. The couple continued to model and display their anatomical waxes in their home until Manzolini’s death.
Morandi created the double portrait to celebrate her family’s shared achievements in the field of anatomical waxworks. While she dissects a brain (Fig. 1), Manzolini, dressed in a sombre black doctoral gown, his gaze elsewhere, reveals a dissected human heart, flayed to show the mitral and tricuspid valves (Fig. 2). These portraits disclose as much about Bolognese anatomical wax making as they do about Morandi’s social, professional, and intellectual status.

The portrait’s lifeliness asserts Morandi’s skill as an anatomist, but it also affirms her membership to an elite category of Bolognese intellectual: native women artists. From the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries, a number of Bolognese women were celebrated for their artistic skill and excellence. Important visitors to Bologna frequented the painter Elisabetta Sirani’s (1638–1665) studio to watch her work – a precedent to Morandi’s regular guests.
Some were the subject of the aforementioned *laude*, and Malvasia cites them as a source of civic pride in his *Felsina pittrice* (‘Lives of the Bolognese Painters’). These women artists were particularly renowned for their self-portraits in which they depicted themselves in the act of painting, itself posited as an intellectual, gentlewomanly activity. In her wax self-portrait, Morandi fashioned herself as a gentlewoman, artist, intellectual, and scientist in a synthesis of Bolognese female self-portraiture.

One such precedent is Lavinia Fontana’s (1552–1614) *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo* (Fig. 6). Elegantly dressed, Lavinia sits among her books, statues, and paper – the accoutrements of a learned person – and holds a pen in her right hand, poised above a blank page in the moment before writing or drawing. Although Morandi created her self-portrait over a century later, viewers can imagine the finely dressed Morandi continuing her demonstration by removing the brain from the skull and revealing its complex structures. Rather than implying her intellectual faculties through the presence of dissection tools, she explicitly references her abilities of uniting the eye, the mind, and the hand in the creation of the portrait itself as well as in her ability to dissect a human skull, interpret her findings, and share them with her audience. Although Morandi received widespread praise for her talent as a ceroplastician, this self-portrait reads as a reincarnation of Malvasia’s fearless women artists who took their fame into their own hands.

The intersection of allegory and the woman artist’s body was a well-established trope by Morandi’s lifetime, even beyond Bologna. Catharina van Hemessen’s (Antwerp, 1528–after 1587) *Self-Portrait*, Sofonisba Anguissola’s (Cremona, Antwerp, 1532–1625) *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, 1548. Oil on oak panel. From Kunstmuseum Basel, Sammlung Online. (Plate 5, p. 356)
1535–1625) *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (Fig. 7), and Fontana’s *Self-Portrait in the Studiolo* are early examples of the gentlewoman artist at work, imagery that Artemisia Gentileschi (Rome, 1593–1653) engaged in her *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638–1639) (Fig. 8).
Leaning towards the edge of the picture plane, the painter raises her brush in her right hand, moments before applying pigment to the canvas behind her. Her left arm supports her palette and the weight of her upper body, propping her up physically and professionally. We anticipate the impending elliptical motion of the artist’s right arm to reapply paint to her brush, the trajectory of that gesture interrupted by the prominent gold chain hanging off her breast – a sign of respect given by patrons to male painters. She is poised in a moment of meditative inspiration, a hallmark of the nobility of painting, a fundamentally intellectual exercise.

Mary Garrard contends that Gentileschi’s identification with Cesare Ripa’s allegorical figure of Painting asserts a woman artist’s unique ability to make herself the embodiment of the art of painting – something no male artist could ever achieve given the exclusively female identity of allegorical figures. In this vein, Morandi’s self-portrait serves as an allegory of dissection: Morandi is not opening a skull or cutting brain tissue – the motion of her hands is arrested, and her gaze is angled towards her audience. She mediates her audience’s understanding of the body, affirming the impossibility of her work without engaging the intellect. Morandi’s dissection of the brain represents the significance of touch to the world of knowledge. As Elizabeth Cropper has argued in the case of Gentileschi, the specificity of Morandi’s gesture encapsulates all facets of her being, embodying ‘her art, her consubstantiality with it’ (Fig. 8). Morandi is both an allegory and a material embodiment of her professional identity (Fig. 1).

Morandi’s focus on the sensory organs engages a dialogue on the connection of the eye and the hand, which was as central to artistic theory as it was to anatomical practice. The disputa delle arti placed the artist’s hand at the centre of the polemic between painters and sculptors: according to painters, the physicality required of the sculptor aligned sculpture more closely with the manual labour of craftspeople than painting. Artemisia’s focus on the action of her female figures’ ‘working hands’ is a vehicle for the artist to ‘[signal] her artistic presence to us through subtle and witty gestures of the hand’. Morandi’s graceful hands illuminate the polite and refined nature of her work, while the modelled forms themselves embody the artist’s physical labour, brought to the viewers’ consciousness through the tactility of the wax medium (Fig. 9).

Morandi’s artistic training and exposure to the disputa delle arti predisposed her to the creation of anatomical preparations of the sensory organs. However, she dedicates only one of her notebooks to a detailed explanation of the connection between the physical structures and their sensations: the hand. Morandi explains that ‘whatever object presents itself to the hand for examination of its tangible qualities, nature immediately permits the hand, of all the anatomical members the most capable and sincere judge, to evaluate it’. To illustrate this concept, she created models of the left and right (now lost) hands, with the left hand ‘compressing with delight’ as it rests upon a soft surface, while the right hand recoils in pain upon touching a thorny branch.
The right hand’s sharp reaction, Morandi explains, derives from the ‘opposite nature’ of the prickly branch to soft human flesh.

In the context of the *disputa delle arti*, Morandi’s sensitivity to these differences, and her assignation of memory to the sense of touch, assumes a new potency. The hand played a crucial role in aiding memory, whether as a mnemonic device or teaching tool. It was the nexus of matter, mind, and spirit – a metaphor for the entirety of a person, itself considered a microcosm of the universe. Theorists posited the hand as perfectly designed for *apprehensia* (‘grasping’), both in physically taking hold of something and in understanding new concepts.

**Across Art and Science**

Morandi emphasised her hands-on experience at the dissection table, telling a visitor to her collection in 1755 that she had dissected one thousand corpses. Lucia Dacone and Rebecca Messbarger suggest that this need to prove her scientific credentials indicates a desire to fashion herself as an anatomist rather than an artificer. Scholars have drawn these conclusions in part from the opinions of Giampietro Zanotti (1674–1765), the secretary of the Accademia...
Clementina and teacher of Ercole Lelli. While Zanotti initially encouraged Lelli to pursue his interests in anatomical sculpture by attending dissections, he felt that anatomical study should serve purely to support the accurate representation of the human form—dissections were ‘useless’ skills for a painter, who needed to master so many other techniques. Indeed, in 1747, Lambertini designated Lelli’s anatomical preparations for the Anatomy Museum for teaching anatomy to students of figure drawing and sculpture. The question whether artists should master anatomical knowledge permeated Morandi’s world, her double portrait challenging this polemic.

The sceptical accademici of the Clementina believed that any artist interested in mastering anatomical study debased the nobility of the profession in the pursuit of a manual trade at odds with the intellectual and gentlemanly status that artists had worked for centuries to obtain. Luigi Crespi disparaged the idea that painters be conversant in the body’s internal structures as ‘a grave fraud that in the end brings them nothing but a pact with fools and some self-serving ideas about their own merit […] to have the mastery of an art comprise those things that contribute nothing to the perfection of the art itself is idiocy and a sham.’ Others, such as Francesco Algarotti, suggested that artists learn human locomotion through study of the muscular and skeletal systems.

Manzolini and Morandi’s expertise in the human body would have placed them in an unfavourable light in the eyes of many accademici, particularly given their use of human specimens in their preparations. How do we reconcile their artistic formation with their turn to intensive anatomical study and discovery? Morandi’s compositional references to self-portraiture and the specificity with which she depicted her and her husband’s visages diverge from her anatomical preparations. The portraits evoke the sitters’ immediate presence, rather than stand as a universal model for the male and female human body.

By departing from the faithful recreation of the human body from the inside out, Morandi’s portraits evince her command of the interconnectivity of the muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems to represent rather than recreate her and her husband’s bodies. Operating as ‘doubles’ of their personae as anatomists and teachers, the portraits persuade the viewer of their mastery of anatomical study within the traditional visual lexicon of Bolognese naturalism. Therefore, in the context of portraiture, lifeliness mattered more to Morandi than physiological veracity.

Women and the Academy

For women artists, the full embrace of the art academies was not essential to defining professional success. Morandi joined the Clementina with the title of Accademica, which was, effectively, an honorific: women could not attend meetings, nor were they eligible for elected office. Zanotti stated in the foreword
to his *Storia dell’Accademia Clementina* that just because one was not elected as an academician did not mean one was not an excellent artist, but rather that there were simply too many talented practitioners in Bologna to include everyone worthy of membership.\(^{44}\) Zanotti’s history of the Clementina and Crespi’s addendum to Malvasia’s *Felsina pittrice*, both studded with glowing accounts of Bologna’s women artists, indicate that women were recognised by and incorporated into the academy even though they were not elected academicians.

This phenomenon was not unique to Bologna: Rome’s *Accademia di San Luca* similarly supported women artists. An anonymous list of ‘Nomi delle SS Accademiche Pittrice’ (‘Names of the Most Holy Academy’s Women Painters’) indicate that many were added posthumously to the academy’s membership rolls.\(^ {45}\) This list included the Bolognese Elisabetta Sirani, who never set foot in Rome but was nevertheless an *accademica di merito* – the title given to a professional or learned figure who neither attended meetings nor held elected office. It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that dates of admission began to accompany the names of the *accademiche di onore*.\(^ {46}\)

While the Clementina marginalised, they were by no means invisible. The Clementina named local saint Caterina Vigri as patron, incorporating one of Bologna’s earliest women artists into its spiritual and civic identity.\(^ {47}\) The academy’s formal establishment in 1710 necessarily excluded Bologna’s most illustrious women artists from membership in their lifetimes, and rather than explicitly allowing women to join, the statutes of 1706 merely note that women are ‘not forbidden’ from becoming honorary members as long as they possess ‘virtù eccellente’, akin to their colleagues of ‘noble birth’ or those ‘in a similar profession’.\(^ {48}\) As Peter Lukehart has demonstrated, Giovanna Garzoni was similarly marginalised by the *Accademia di San Luca*, yet her devotion to and impression on it was never diminished\(^ {49}\) – she was a successful artist at various Italian courts prior to her admission into the academy. Women could not enjoy full membership to the academies, but their lower profiles within them did not hinder their careers.

The relationship between Bologna’s artists’ guild and art academy in the early modern era was unique in that membership in the guild was not requisite for participation in the Clementina. Bolognese artists vocalised their belief in the nobility of their profession, a lucrative and prestigious one from the seventeenth century,\(^ {50}\) and they sought to extricate themselves from what they felt was the overly inclusive *Compagnia dei Pittori*, or painters’ guild. The guild allowed artists, artisans, and even merchants to join, keeping the cycle of production and sales in one organisation – the only such configuration in Italy.\(^ {51}\) In their 1706 petition to the Bolognese Senate for the foundation of an academy, the so-called *professori della pittura* articulated a desire to distinguish themselves from the *artisti meccanici*, who practised art forms beyond painting, sculpture, and architecture. The ‘professors’ felt themselves above the ‘more mechanical Companies’, and desired freedom from the guild. The key distinction between
the ‘professors’ and the ‘mechanical artists’, they argued, was the former’s desire to obtain ‘high honour for themselves and the Fatherland’.52

In Rome and Florence, members of the artists’ guild were named in the rolls of the cities’ academies. Women in these cities avoided matriculation in artists’ guilds to save money, time, and loneliness from breaking with societal norms.53 Even Artemisia Gentileschi was simply a matriculant in Florence’s artists’ guild (one who avoided paying her membership fee) and not an elected member of the academy. It seems that the academy benefitted from the presence of her name (prestigious due to her connections to important patrons such as the Medici and her success as the master of a workshop) on its rolls.54

Morandi joined the Clementina as an *accademica d’onore* in 1758, over a decade after she began her practice as an anatomical ceroplastician. Like Garzoni and Gentileschi, Morandi had already achieved international repute before her association with her city’s academy, which needed her in its ranks for the pride she brought to her native city more than she needed the academy for professional status.

Although Morandi was an *accademica d’onore*, she trained as an artist in the studios of independent practitioners in Bologna – a common practice in the eighteenth century.55 While the Clementina offered instruction in drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture, its most important mission was

the maintenance and transmission [...] of the “inheritance of the great Bolognese painting of the seventeenth century” [...] the defence of the Bolognese artistic patrimony; and the reinforcement of the figurative arts’ position within the liberal arts, in opposition to their lower status as professional associations or crafts.56

The Clementina was interested in preserving and promulgating Bologna’s heritage of great naturalistic painting. In this light, the Clementina’s principles are not ‘backwards’, but rather a complement to the Institute of Science’s commitment to Marsili’s ideal of the *naturalista metodico* (‘methodical natural philosopher’), who uses *esperienza* (‘experience’) to ‘uncover the intrinsic order and underlying operations of the human body’.57

**Bolognese Naturalism and Working with Wax**

Naturalism was a hallmark of Bolognese visual culture for centuries. Bologna’s agricultural identity inspired a rapport with nature, visible in artworks full of clear and dramatic expressions of human emotion.58 As the university’s naturalists promoted knowledge of the natural world, Bolognese artists similarly searched for a pictorial language that could clearly communicate art’s messages, using forms found in nature rather than invented ones popularised in
mannerist art. Local artists Annibale, Agostino, and Ludovico Carracci founded the Accademia degli Incamminati around 1582 to instruct artists from both a theoretical and practical standpoint, stressing the study of nature and drawing from life. Bologna’s eighteenth-century academicians held the Carracci approach to naturalism as the standard to which all artists should aspire.\footnote{59}

Elizabeth Cropper describes the Carracci as ‘advocating a return to drawing from nature […] [for] out of the natural, through the imitation of art, [they] produced painting that was verisimilar, or persuasive, but within the traditions of art and decorum.’\footnote{60} This emphasis on persuasive verisimilitude arose from a renewed interest in the poetic conceit of \textit{enargeia}, first described by Pliny the Younger and later by Isidore of Seville as ‘the putting, as it were, of an event before the eyes of an audience.’\footnote{61} Baroque art theorist Franciscus Junius described \textit{enargeia} as ‘Nature and Art, are so close coupled together, that the one may not be separated from the other.’\footnote{62} This poetic forcefulness, a challenge to the viewer to discern the natural from the artificial, was only possible with the ‘mutuall support of Art and Nature; nature is to follow the directions of art, even as art is to follow the prompt readinesse of our forward nature.’\footnote{63} The sheen of Morandi’s skin, the soft texture of her hair, the pearlescent shine of her jewellery – the verisimilitude of the portrait evinces the artist’s command of the power of \textit{enargeia}, and, by extension, of contemporary artistic theory.

Fig. 10. Giovanni Manzolini and Anna Morandi Manzolini, \textit{Foetus with Placenta and Umbilical Cord}, eighteenth century. Wax and mixed media. Inv. n. CECOMA 94, Museo di Palazzo Poggi – Bologna; © Università di Bologna – Sistema Museale di Ateneo. Photo credit: Fulvio Simoni. (Plate 8, p. 359)
In the context of Bologna’s tradition of naturalism, Crespi’s description of Morandi’s preparations, made in wax and colorita al natural, assumes greater valence. Art and nature cannot be separated, evinced in the uncanny similarity of polychrome wax to human flesh. Morandi’s portrait continues this theme by presenting herself as an intellectual akin to Bologna’s women artists and engaged in advanced scientific study, the hand gestures for both so similar as to challenge the viewer to discern between her artistic and scientific prowess. She is not covered in the filth and stench of dissection, nor is she dishevelled from melting, moulding, and colouring beeswax. Morandi persuades us of her talents as an artist-anatomist.

In his oration on Morandi, electrophysicist Luigi Galvani stated that nature ‘is always one, and remains the same and identical’, guaranteeing the everlasting truth of Morandi’s preparations. As in the works of the Carracci, the verismilitude of Morandi’s preparations were, continued Galvani, truer to nature than the natural body itself, as their ‘solidity, malleability, and reliable colouring [...] enabled them to better express crucial anatomical features, such as shape, position, direction, and development’ While Galvani hypothesised that other artists could make more beautiful or pleasant models, they could not approximate Morandi’s ability to capture the truth of the human form (Fig. 10).

In the workshops of Lelli, Morandi, and Manzolini, anatomical ceroplasticians made their creations from human skeletons by moulding wax directly over natural bones taken from a human skeleton. The use of skeletal bones reinforced by a metal scaffold allowed Lelli to adjust the statues’ positions for use by both medical and drawing students. Therefore, while Lelli could argue that his waxworks, focused on the muscular and skeletal systems, were more accurate because they incorporated human specimens, Morandi and Manzolini, with their focus on the sensory organs and the male and female reproductive systems, relied on their powers of imitation and knowledge of the human body to faithfully capture the colours and textures of what they saw and felt during dissections. Not only did their waxes need to be physiologically accurate, but they needed to look as lifelike as possible (Fig. 11).

Anatomical ceroplastics increasingly detached from the inclusion of human specimens over time. Ceroplasticians initially injected wax mixed with mineral oil, turpentine, or quicksilver into the vascular system of dried human specimens to preserve the structure of veins and arteries. As these specimens decayed, Bologna’s anatomical wax makers turned to coating bones in tow and beeswax. They first whitened their wax, and once applied, coloured it with mixed pigments, coating the surface of the object in the trappings of reality and transforming the specimen into a model. The identities of the human bodies on which the anatomical figures were modelled were obscured and viewed as a model of the universal human body – a poetic model of form.

Wax’s malleability and multifarious utility lend it an inherent instability and ambiguity. Wax was regarded as potentially absorptive of mal aria (‘bad air’).
and disease due to its porous nature. Conversely, its association with bees – creatures to which were ascribed the exemplary Christian virtues of wisdom and industry – made wax the ideal medium for the creation of liturgical candles, ex-voto objects for religious devotion, and even death masks. Furthermore, wax’s changes in state were contingent upon human intervention: melted into a liquid, cooled into a solid, and whitened and coloured easily and infinitesimally. As God moulded man, man manipulated wax.

Wax serves as a potent material by which Morandi transgressed the bifurcation of the arts and sciences, and even the disputa delle arti. When associated with dead flesh, its similarities to skin transform that which is organic or living into something beyond life – that is, dead. Morandi carefully copied cadaver organs during dissections, keeping structures alive that, in reality, could not survive beyond the protective case of the human body. These organs – especially those of the head and heart in the Morandi double portrait – place Julius von Schlosser’s notion of the ‘pictorial sympathetic magic’ of wax at the fore

Fig. 11. Anna Morandi Manzolini, The Extraocular Muscles, eighteenth century. Wax and mixed media. Inv. n. CECOMA 102, Museo di Palazzo Poggi – Bologna; © Università di Bologna – Sistema Museale di Ateneo. Photo credit: Fulvio Simoni. (Plate 9, p. 358)
of our engagement with them. Disembodied, the head and the heart nevertheless approximate the living couple, their shared facture in wax transporting them across the borders life and death. Indeed, the ontological slippage of wax mimics Morandi’s professional persona: an artist of the fleshy structures of the human body, a master of art and anatomy.

**Wax Portraiture in Bologna**

Bologna’s sculptural tradition of modelling rather than carving supported a thriving industry of portraiture in terracotta and wax, materials that, once coloured, naturally lent themselves to vivid reproductions of human physiognomies. The city housed numerous such portraits of men and women from different social classes and professions. These portraits wore the personal effects of the sitter, sometimes including such bodily relics as hair and fingernails. Even the artists and architects of the Clementina participated in this aspect of Bolognese life as subjects and artificers.

A prominent example is Carlo Francesco Dotti, the architect of the shrine San Luca and celebrated member of the Clementina, who commissioned Angelo Gabriello Piò, a former colleague of Manzolini and Lelli, to make his wax portrait (Fig. 12). Dotti holds a document bearing the inscription ‘S. Luca’, referring to his architectural masterwork, which was home to the miraculous image of the Madonna di San Luca, the symbol of Bolognese Mariology since its

![Fig. 12. Angelo Gabriello Piò (attributed), Architect Carlo Francesco Dotti (1670-1769), wax bust, eighteenth century. © 2022. DeAgostini Picture Library/Scala, Florence.](image-url)
arrival in the city in 1160. Believed to have been painted by Saint Luke himself, and the icon has been carried annually, from the sanctuary in the hills through the city’s streets, beginning in 1433. With his wax portrait, Dotti associates himself with San Luca, the patron saint of painters (and, by tradition, believed to have been a physician), as well as the Bolognese traditions of wax portraiture and devotion to local holy women.

Archbishop Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597), architect of the Tridentine reforms and Bologna native, placed female education at the heart of his pedagogic agenda, which was established in the late sixteenth century and lasted well into Morandi’s lifetime. Paleotti founded schools in Bologna where girls learned to contemplate images and texts detailing the lives of female saints, who served as paragons of moral virtue to which they might aspire.78 Unsurprisingly, Crespi ascribes the very values of humility, piety, fidelity, subjugation, and repentance embodied in these saints to his biography of Morandi.79 Although widowed (and thus not a virginal figure like Elisabetta Sirani), Morandi’s commitment to serving her husband and her supportive temperament placed her squarely within the proscribed accepted behaviours of Bologna’s patriarchal society.
Thus, over the course of the seventeenth century, the cults of local holy women blossomed. Caterina Vigri, a local religious cult figure beatified in 1592, was canonised in 1712, shortly before Morandi’s birth. Not only was Saint Caterina the founder of Bologna’s convent of the Poor Clares, the Corpus Domini, she was also an amateur artist. On display in the convent since the late fifteenth century, her incorrupt body sits among her manuscripts, which she illustrated herself (Fig. 13). The cult of Saint Caterina of Bologna inspired other incorrupt holy women, such as Elena Duglioli dall’Olio, whom Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, Lelli and Manzolini’s patron, first nominated for beatification. By placing her scientifically preserved body in a vitrine, Morandi models herself after the saintly woman artist and her followers.

Unsurprisingly, given the proud heritage of female accomplishment in Bologna, women artists fashioned themselves not only after literary precedents of laude, but after these pictorial and saintly models as well. Elisabetta Sirani made this connection explicitly in her Self-Portrait as a Nun-Saint (Fig. 14), in which she depicts herself in a habit, deprived of her feminine attributes and resembling Caterina Vigri, patron saint of the Accademia Clementina—a choice inspired, no doubt, by calls for Vigri’s canonisation. The parallels between Sirani and Bologna’s holy women persisted after the artist’s death. Her family organised a public funeral and commissioned a large catafalque, which featured a life-size portrait of the artist before her easel (Fig. 15). Sirani’s body was rendered, according to Malvasia’s wrenching eulogy, ‘al naturale’. While he does not specify the material used for the sculpture, we know that it was polychromed and meant to be as lifelike as possible.

The wax material of Morandi’s self-portrait, like Sirani’s funerary sculpture, imparts an uncannily convincing vividness consistent with enargeia. As Georges Didi-Huberman notes, wax’s fundamental material and ontological instability as well as its psychological and phenomenological viscosity both attracts and disturbs the viewer. The wax, silk, lace, and human hair together create a convincing picture of living flesh and blood, and yet it is Morandi’s animated gesture – unveiling what is an unequivocally dead brain – that challenges the viewer to discern whether she is alive. Furthermore, the positive Christian values ascribed to wax tie Morandi’s use of the medium to the incorrupt bodies of the city’s holy women.

The portrait vacillates between a popular waxwork and an anatomical model, rewarding viewers with delight as they peel back its layers of meaning. According to Beth Kowaleski Wallace, the popular waxwork ‘[celebrates] an intact physicality that is better than normal for its inability to decay’, whereas scientific knowledge embraces the ‘anomalous, the extraordinary, or even the simply weird physicality’. These works maintain their epistemological connections to the abject body, the wax medium a reminder of anatomical preparations or infirm body parts reproduced in miniature for votive purposes. The display of Morandi’s double portrait in the domestic settings of her familial home and,
later, her apartment in the Palazzo Ranuzzi, reifies and challenges those connections. While both locations conform to the traditional viewing settings of celebrity portraits and visits, the Ranuzzi apartment turns Morandi herself into a celebrity portrait, on display in the Bolognese Institute like her anatomical preparations and self-portrait. She is one of Bologna’s extraordinary women, whose remarkably intact body will survive as a site of religious, intellectual, and campanilistic (‘local patriotic’) pilgrimage, as well as artistic inspiration.

In 1749, the anatomist Jacopo Bartolomeo Beccari celebrated Manzolini’s choice to take as his wife, ‘a woman of supreme goodness, and a singular talent’ who helped him make ‘some great works’. While she was exalted in her lifetime for her pleasant disposition and industriousness, recent scholars have rightly
elucidated the ways in which Morandi expressed her intellectual authority in the world of anatomical dissection. Her portrait places Morandi at the nexus of art, science, and local religious devotion – an elegant synthesis of several mimetic traditions that would not have been lost on viewers, regardless of whether they were affiliated with the arts or sciences.86

The concomitant inscription of votive waxwork, intact holy women, anatomical specimen, and the tradition of excellence of Bologna’s women artists onto Morandi’s wax surfaces – indeed, her own likeness – challenges visitors to Morandi’s collection to determine which figure in the room (including the corporeally present Morandi herself) is the most ‘real’. The portraits themselves embody enargeia, a conceit that would doubtless enchant visitors well versed in artistic and literary theory. This is not to say that the portraits’ verisimilitude would not please viewers accustomed to eighteenth-century modes of celebrity portraiture without a grounding in the theory of enargeia, but rather to illuminate the possibility – the invitation, really – for viewers to dive deeper, promising yet another layer of delight for the knowledgeable.

By moulding her body in the same material from which she created her universalised anatomical models, Morandi offers herself as the ideal, eighteenth-century Bolognese woman. She has mastered her scientific craft, and significantly, her skill in portraiture aligns her not only with a long-established tradition of excellence in Bolognese naturalistic painting but also with a deeply engrained culture of celebration of the city’s female citizens. Indeed, she signed her letters as a ‘Cittadina Bolognese’ (‘Bolognese citizen’) before describing herself as an ‘Anatomica e Accademica d’onore dell’Istituto delle Scienze di Bologna’ (‘Anatomist and Honorary Academician of the Institute of Sciences of Bologna’).87 With this self-portrait, Morandi displays her femininity not as an obstacle she overcame, but rather as a sign of intellectual authority – a tangible, clear connection to a long line of Bolognese women of extraordinary achievement in the arts and sciences.
Notes

1. This chapter originally took form as a paper presented at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz's Bologna Studienkurs in 2017. Gerhard Wolf, Jessica Richardson, Annette Hoffmann, and Marco Musillo guided me to Anna Morandi Manzolini and inspired me to continue my investigation of her work. I thank Sheila Barker, Elizabeth Cropper, and Peter M. Lukehart, whose questions, comments, and suggestions productively shaped my thinking as this project evolved. I am also very much indebted to Meredith Gill and Anthony Colantuono, whose comments and support throughout all stages of this project were invaluable.

2. Contemporary sources refer to Anna Morandi Manzolini by both her maiden name, Morandi, and her husband’s surname, Manzolini. I use Morandi’s family name to distinguish her from her husband, to whom I will refer by his surname.


5. For their most recent interventions, see Dacome, *Malleable Anatomies*; Miriam Focaccia (ed.), *Anna Morandi Manzolini una donna fra arte e scienza: immagini, documenti, repertorio anatomico*, Florence, Olschki, 2008; Rebecca Messbarger, *The Lady Anatomist: The Life and Work of Anna Morandi Manzolini*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2010. Focaccia’s text contains a transcription of Morandi’s notebooks as well as correspondence related to her life and career. The full inventory of Morandi’s library (including her notebooks), the *Catalogo delle preparazioni anatomiche in cera formanti il Gabinetto anatomico prima della Reggia Università*, is located in the University Library of Bologna (BUB ms. 2123–2193).

6. The portraits remained together after Morandi sold the couple’s collection of anatomical waxes to Senator Girolamo Ranuzzi in 1769. Ranuzzi later donated it to the Bolognese Institute of Sciences, where it can still be found in the Anatomy Museum of the Palazzo Poggi. The collection, a private museum in the Manzolini residence, comprised anatomical wax models of the sensory organs, the urogenital tract, the male and female reproductive systems, and the muscular system made by the couple and, after Manzolini’s death in 1755, by Morandi alone. The significance of the sculptures as a double portrait, and the representation of Giovanni’s portrait in particular, warrants further investigation.


9. While 1088 is widely considered the founding date of Bologna’s university, rectors in the nineteenth century chose it out of convenience. The university developed from schools of liberal arts, which flourished in Bologna beginning in the early eleventh century. A ‘school’ of Bologna’s university is first implicitly documented in the *Habita of 1158* by Frederick Barbarossa.


13. Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), a naturalist and scientific illustrator, published illustrated catalogues on caterpillars and travelled to Dutch Suriname to record tropical insects. Giovanna Garzoni (1600–1670) served various patrons throughout Italy thanks to her skill at botanical illustration. For the latest scholarship on Garzoni, see Sheila Barker (ed.), ‘The Immensity of the Universe’ in *The Art of Giovanna Garzoni*, Livorno, Gallerie degli Uffizi, distributed by Sillabe, 2020.


Between the circulation of prints of these images and the possibility of seeing them in person, we can conclude that Morandi would have been familiar with these women and at least some of their works. See Ann Sutherland Harris, *Artemisia Gentileschi and Elisabetta Sirani: Rivals or Strangers?*, in *Women’s Art Journal*, 2010, 31(1), 3–12.


For the original text, see Focaccia, *Anna Morandi Manzolini una donna fra arte e scienza*, 140; for a translation, see Messbarger, ‘Waxing Poetic: Anna Morandi Manzolini’s Anatomical Sculptures’, in *Configurations*, 2001, 9(1), 90.

Messbarger, Ibid.

On the significance of the hand in the early modern world, see Claire Richter Sherman (ed.), *Writing on Hands: Memory and Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, Washington, DC, Folger Shakespeare Library, 2000.


Ibid.


A WOMAN OF SUPREME GOODNESS, AND A SINGULAR TALENT

43. This was the case in other Italian academies, including the Accademia di San Luca in Rome and the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno in Florence. See Peter M. Lukehart, ‘Giovanna Garzoni, “Accademica”, in Sheila Barker (ed.), “The Immensity of the Universe” in the Art of Giovanna Garzoni*, Livorno, Gallerie degli Uffizi, distributed by Sillabe, 2020, 96. Morandi was admitted to Bologna’s Accademia dei Gelati, a literary academy, as a regular member for her achievements in art. Furthermore, the Florentine Accademia delle Arti del Disegno included Morandi in its ranks on 11 February 1761. See Messbarger, *The Lady Anatomist*, 112–115.
46. Ibid., 99. The Clementina could only have forty active *accademici* at a given time, while *accademici d’onore* could be added at any time. See Lipparini, *L’accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna*, Argelato, Minerva, 2003, 7.
47. The invocation of Caterina Vigri as patron can be found in the first statute. See Lipparini, *L’accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna*, 85.
49. Lukehart, ‘Giovanna Garzoni, Accademica’.
54. Professional affiliation with academies and guilds did not determine women artists’ professional success. Records from Florence’s painters’ guild dating to the fourteenth century evince the admission of women into its ranks, and the 1427 *catasto* (‘census’) confirms that women were working as painters without matriculating in guilds. Barker, ‘Art as Women’s Work’, 7.
55. Although we know little about Morandi’s training, we do know that Manzolini participated in the Clementina’s competition in figure drawing as part of the ‘second class’ of young artists in 1727. He also attended the Scuola del Nudo, the Clementina’s life drawing institute that was open to members of the public. See Focaccia, *Anna Morandi Manzolini*, 40; Crespi, *Felsina Pittrice*, vol. 3, 301; and Lipparini, *L’accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna*, 86–87.
Caroline Paganussi


61. Ibid., 295.

62. Ibid., 48–50.

63. Ibid., 5–56.


67. Ibid.

68. Malleable Anatomies, 7.


72. Roberta Panzanelli, ‘The Body in Wax, the Body of Wax’, in Roberta Panzanelli (ed.), *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2008, 2.


74. Ibbid.


76. Ibbid.


78. Ibbid.


80. Ibbid.