

The critical edition and annotated translation of Carlo Cesare Malvasia's *Felsina pittrice: Lives of the Bolognese Painters* (Bologna, 1678), produced under the auspices of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, will be composed of sixteen, richly illustrated volumes. *Volume One: Early Bolognese Painting* was published in 2012.

This critical edition, the first ever attempted, also offers the first integral transcription of Malvasia's preparatory notes, the *Scritti originali*, preserved today in the Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio, Bologna. Detailed historical notes in English, keyed to both Italian and English parallel text, establish Malvasia's many sources and document the history of artists and works of art mentioned. The reassessment of the text also makes reference to the fine copy, or *Imprimatur* volume, submitted to the Bolognese Inquisition in 1677, as well as to the *Schede autografe*, Malvasia's glosses to his personal copy of the book. A sixteenth volume will include the critical edition and annotated translation of Malvasia's *Claustro di San Michele in Bosco* (1694).

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Back cover image:
Francesco Gessi, *Saint Francis in Ecstasy Supported by Two Angels*, 1620–1625, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Photo: Soprintendenza BSAE, Bologna.



CROPPER
AND
PERICOLO

MALVASIA'S FELSINA PITTRICE

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THE
VISUAL ARTS



CARLO CESARE MALVASIA'S
Felsina pittrice
LIVES OF THE BOLOGNESE PAINTERS



VOLUME THIRTEEN
LIVES OF DOMENICHINO AND FRANCESCO GESSI

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Richly illustrated, this critical edition and English translation of Malvasia's lives of Domenichino and Francesco Gessi from his *Felsina pittrice* (1678) offer access to the life and work of two great masters of seventeenth-century Bologna. Domenichino's life plays a seminal role in Malvasia's definition of the "fourth age" of painting in Italy. From the very beginning, Malvasia pits against each other Guido Reni and Domenichino, the two champions of the vanguard style that emerged from the Carracci reform of painting. If Guido becomes the idol of the Lombard and Bolognese school, "more attuned to tenderness and audacity," Domenichino embodies an ideal of perfection more in keeping with the Florentine and Roman school, "fond of finish and diligence." Malvasia reports that he did not know Domenichino, and his reconstruction of the career of the master as he moved among Bologna, Rome, and Naples stands in stark contrast to Giovan Pietro Bellori's more sympathetic account, published in 1672. If, to redeem the supremacy of the Bolognese school, Malvasia downplays the extent of Domenichino's "erudition" and "fertility" of invention, he does so with hesitation and among unresolvable contradictions. His assimilation of Domenichino's art to the Roman and Tuscan canon is, then, profoundly polemical. In this light, Malvasia's life of Domenichino can be defined as the most tormented and ultimately unsuccessful eulogy of the *Felsina pittrice*: a great piece of art historical criticism about an artist whose greatness Malvasia could not deny. Malvasia's assessment of the artistic personality of Francesco Gessi turns upon the painter's rivalry with his master, Guido Reni, whose perfection in painting nevertheless remains unmatchable. In relating how Domenichino snatched away the highly talented Giovan Battista Ruggeri from his previous master, Francesco Gessi, Malvasia turns the conflict inherent in Domenichino's life into a generational struggle between artistic fashions. In the process, Malvasia provides important biographical information about Giovan Giacomo Sementi, another of Guido's disciples and Gessi's lifelong rival.

Cover image:
Domenichino, *Martyrdom of Saint Agnes*, detail, c. 1619–1622/25, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna.
Photo: Soprintendenza BSAE, Bologna.