BOOK TWO

The Picture

25 And indeed, since this effort of learning may seem perhaps too tiring to the young, for this reason I consider, at this point, that one must show how much painting, in which we employ every care and diligence, is not unworthy. In fact, painting certainly has in itself a truly divine power, not only because, as they say of friendship, a painting lets the absent be present, but also because it shows [to] the living, after long centuries, the dead, so that [these] become recognized with the artist's great admiration and the viewers' pleasure. Plutarch(1) reports that Cassandrus, one of Alexander's generals, trembled with [his] whole body because he saw a portrait of Alexander already deceased, in which he recognized the majesty of his king, and that [the] Lacedaemonian Agesilaus, because

he knew that he was completely deformed, had refused to make known to posterity his image, and that for this reason he had wished neither to be portrayed nor modeled by anyone.(2) Therefore, the faces of the dead, thanks to painting, have in a certain way a very long life. That painting, in truth, has described the gods, which the people worship, one must consider it as the greatest gift bestowed upon mortals. Painting, in fact, has been enormously useful to religious sentiment – through which we are joined in a particular way to the gods – and to preserve minds with a certain intact devotion. One says that Phidias had realized in Elis a [statue of] Jupiter whose beauty added not little to religious calling.(3) How great, then, is the contribution of painting to the very honest pleasures of the mind and, in general, to the beauty of things; one can value it not only in other ways but also and above all from this: that usually you will give nothing more precious than that which the involvement of painting does not render still more precious and of very great value. Ivory, gems, and all precious things of this kind in the painter's hands become more precious. Also gold itself, elaborated by the art of painting, comes to be repaid with very much more gold. Better still, lead, the lowest-priced of metals, if it was roughly hewn by the hands of Phidias or Praxiteles into some effigy, would [be regarded] perhaps [as] more precious than raw and generally unworked silver.(4) The painter Zeuxis had begun to donate his works because, as he said, they could not be purchased at a price.(5) He thought, in fact, that there did not exist any price to recompense [the one] who, in painting or in modeling living beings, almost behaved himself as a second god among the mortals.(6)

Painting possesses, therefore, these merits: that the well prepared in it not only see their own works admired but also know that they are very similar almost to a god. What will I say of the fact that it is the master or the ornament, undoubtedly exceptional, of all the arts? Only from the painter himself, if I make no mistake, the architect took in fact the architraves, the capitals, the bases, the columns, the pediments, and all other similar ornaments of the edifices. The

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stonemason, the sculptor, as all the artisan workshops, [and] as all the manual arts are certainly guided by rules and by the art of the painter. In short, one will find almost no art, however very humble, that does not involve painting, so that any beautiful thing there is in objects I claim is taken from painting. But painting had been honored by the ancients above all with this distinction: that whereas almost all other craftsmen were called artisans, only the painter was not included in the number of the artisans. Things being so, I have taken the habit of saying, among friends, that **(Fig. 73a)** the inventor of painting was, according to the opinion of poets, that [famous] Narcissus who was transformed into a flower.(7) As the painting is in fact the flower of all the arts, thus the whole tale of Narcissus perfectly adapts to the topic itself. **(Fig. 73b)** To paint, in fact, is what else if not to catch with art that surface of the spring? Quintilian maintained that the ancient painters had the habit of drawing the edges of the shadows generated by the sun and that eventually art improved through a process of additions. Some report that among the first inventors of this art there was a certain Egyptian Philocles and a Cleanthes; I do not know which one.(8) The Egyptians affirm that painting was already practiced among them six thousand years before it was introduced into Greece.(9) In particular, our [writers] say that painting came from Greece to Italy after the victories of Marcellus in Sicily.(10) But it is not of much interest to record either the first painters or the inventors of painting since we are not displaying, like Pliny, a history of painting, but an art in a completely new way. On this, in our days, no documentation of ancient writers, as much as I know, remains any longer, although they say that Euphranor, the Isthmian, wrote something about symmetry and on colors and that Antigonus and Xenocrates put in writing some things about paintings, and that also Apelles composed something on painting for Perseus. Diogenes Laertius reports that also the philosopher Demetrius wrote about painting.(11) Moreover, since all the praiseworthy arts have been passed on by our ancestors by means of written documents, I maintain that also painting had not been

neglected in Italy by our writers. In Italy, the very ancient Etruscans, were certainly, in fact, the most expert of all in the art of painting.(12)

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Trismegistus, a very ancient writer, maintains that painting and sculpture were born together with religion;(13) thus, in fact, he turns to Asclepius: humankind, mindful of nature and [of] its own origins, represented the gods in the resemblance of its own face. And who will deny that in all matters, not only public but also private, profane, and religious, painting has claimed the parts most worthy of esteem? So that I do not find any craft, among mortals, so appreciated by all. One tells of almost unbelievable recompenses for painted panels. Aristides the Theban sold a single picture for one hundred talents.(14) One says that the king Demetrius did not burn down Rhodes in order to avoid destroying a panel by Protogenes.(15) We can affirm therefore that Rhodes was saved from [its] enemies thanks to a single picture. In addition to this, many other things of this kind have been collected, from which one could adequately understand that the good painters have always been held in very great consideration and esteem by all, so that even very noble and, generally, very competent citizens, along with philosophers and kings, took enormous pleasure not only from painted things but also by practicing painting. Lucius Manilius, a Roman citizen, and Fabius, a very celebrated man in Rome, were painters.(16) Turpilius, a Roman knight, painted in Verona. The former praetor and proconsul Sitedius became famous by painting.(17) The tragic poet Pacuvius, grandson of the poet Ennius in relation to his daughter, depicted Hercules in the forum.(18) The philosophers Socrates, Plato, Metrodorus, and Pyrrho acquired the fame of painters. The emperors Nero, Valentinian, and Alexander Severus were very passionate about painting.(19) It would take a long time to recite how many princes or kings have dedicated themselves to this very noble art. There is no need, also, to list quite all the multitude of the ancient painters; one can imagine how [great] that it has been from this: that for Demetrius Phalereus, the son of Phanostratus, were realized, in about four hundred days, three hundred and sixty statues,

some on horseback and others on carts and chariots.(20) But in that city in which the number of sculptors was so great, will we not also question whether the painters were few? Painting and sculpture are certainly related arts, nourished by the same genius. However, I will always prefer the genius of the painter because he applies himself to an extremely difficult thing. But let us return to the matter.

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The number of painters and sculptors was certainly very great in those times, since princes, common people, [the] learned and illiterate delighted in painting. Meanwhile, between the first spoils from the provinces, the ensigns, and the paintings themselves displayed in theaters, one arrived [at] such a point that Paulus Emilius and, in general, not a few Roman citizens taught [their] sons painting among praiseworthy arts, to the aim of having a pleasant and felicitous life.(21) The best custom, that was held in very great consideration among the Greeks, so that the adolescents, born free and freely educated, were taught, together with letters, geometry, and music, also the art of painting.(22) Nevertheless, also for women this capacity of painting was reserved as an honor. Martia, daughter of Varro, is celebrated by writers because she painted.(23) And certainly, painting was so praised and honored that among the Greeks slaves were prohibited by an edict from learning it; certainly, this is not unjust. The art of painting, in fact, is certainly very worthy of free and most noble minds;(24) and for me, in general, it has always been the best indication of that optimum and excellent genius, he whom I would see take strong delight through painting. Moreover, only this art, is equally agreeable both to the learned and the uncultured, something that does not occur in almost any other art, as it is true that it attracts the experts and it is also good to move the unskilled. Nor will you easily find someone who does not wish to progress to greater measure in painting. And, finally, it is obvious that Nature herself shows pleasure in painting. We often see, in fact, that [Nature] makes in marbles hippo-centaurs and bearded faces of kings. Or rather, they say also that in a gem of Pyrrhus the nine Muses, with their attributes, were distinctly depicted from

Nature herself.(25) Add to this that perhaps there is not any art, in learning and in general practicing it, where every generation dedicates itself with so much involvement both by experts and the unskilled. Let me consent to speak of myself. If at times for inclination and in general for pleasure I prepare to paint, [an activity] that I do not do really very often, when I am free from other duties, I apply [myself to it] with so much love in carrying out the work that I can scarcely believe how, at the end, three and even four hours have passed.

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So this art reaps delight throughout the time that you will have practiced it; praise, riches, and perpetual fame in general, when you will have cultivated it well. The situation being so, since painting is the best and very ancient ornament of things, worthy of free men, pleasing to the learned and to the uncultured, I encourage in greater measure the diligent young, as far as it is possible, to dedicate themselves to it. Soon after, I urge those, who are very zealous in painting, to try with every means and diligence to render perfect the art itself of painting. Let you, who set off to excel in painting, take care, first of all, of the name and the fame that you know the ancients have attained. It will also delight [us] certainly to remember that avarice has always been the opponent of praise and virtue. It is rare, in fact, that the mind, intent on gain, obtains the fruit of posterity. And indeed I have seen many in the blossom itself, so to say, of the best learning, lowering [themselves] on the spot to gain(26) and then obtain neither praise nor riches. If these had cultivated talent with study, they would easily be elevated to glory; in this case, they would have obtained both riches and pleasure. And so one has said enough on these [topics]. Let us return to [our] undertaking.

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We divide painting into three parts; subdivision that we certainly know from Nature herself. Since painting, in fact, aspires to represent the objects seen, let us note in what way they themselves come to sight. First of all, when we watch an [object], we certainly see that there is something that occupies a place. The painter will define, then, the extent of this place and will call a similar process of tracing the

edge with the appropriate term of the drawing of the profiles. Soon after, observing, we realize that the multiple surfaces of a seen object correspond among themselves, and the artist will rightly summon these connections of the surfaces, in tracing them in the appropriate places, calling it composition. At last, examining, we recognize more distinctly the colors of the surfaces; the representation of this phenomenon in painting will be named, according to us, in a very appropriate way, reception of light, since it receives by the light [sources] almost all differences.

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Painting is realized therefore through the drawing of profiles, composition, and the reception of light. From this [it] follows, then, that we must now talk about these in the briefest possible way, and firstly about the drawing of profiles. Certainly, the drawing of profiles is that which in a painting circumscribes the trace of the edges through lines. It is given that in this the painter Parrhasius, he with whom, in Xenophon, there is a dialogue of Socrates, was very expert. They say, in fact, that that well-known [painter] has used the lines in a very subtle way.(27) Without doubt, in this drawing of profiles, I maintain that one needs to be careful of this: that it [a drawing] is made with lines above all in the subtlest possible way and in general quite evasive to sight; they say that the painter Apelles was accustomed to practicing [lines] of such kind and that he competed with Protogenes.(28) And because the drawing of the profiles is nothing but the delineation of edges, if in reality this is made by means of a greatly accentuated line, the borders of surfaces will not appear in the painting if not as demarcations. No other [object], then, except the trace of the edges, would I like to attain with the drawing of the profiles, in which, I state, one needs to strongly practice. One will not be able to praise, in fact, any composition and, in general, any reception of lights without the drawing of profiles having been employed. On the contrary, only the drawing of profiles is for the most part very agreeable. Let it, therefore, be that one takes care in the drawing of profiles; for the attainment of which in the best way, I think, one cannot

find anything more convenient than that veil, that I myself, among my friends, usually call cut, whose use I now discovered for the first time.(29) It is of this kind: **(Fig. 74)** a veil woven of very thin threads and loosely intertwined, dyed with any color, subdivided with thicker threads according to parallel partitions, in as many squares as you like, and held stretched by a frame; which [veil] I place, indeed, between the object to be represented and the eye, so that the visual pyramid penetrates through the thinness of the veil. This cut of the veil, in fact, certainly offers no few opportunities, first of all because it always presents the same surfaces unchanged. After having established the limits, in fact, you will find there and then the original apex of the pyramid, a thing which is really very difficult [to find] without a cut. And you have learned, in painting something, how it is impossible to correctly imitate what does not, without interruption, maintain the same aspect of itself toward him who paints.(30) Hence it follows that things depicted by others are more easily imitable than those sculpted, because [the depicted] always conserve the same aspect. You have understood then, how changed the distance and, in general, the position of the centric ray are; the seen object itself appears to be altered. **(Fig. 75a)** And so, the veil will guarantee this not negligible advantage which I have spoken of: that the object always stays the same with respect to the view. **(Fig. 75b)** A further advantage consists of the fact that in a panel to be painted, the positions of the edges and the limits of the surfaces can easily be established in very precise locations. In fact, when you observed over here in a parallel the forehead, in the very next the nose, in the near one the cheeks, in the lower the chin, and all things of that kind, situated in their own places, in the same way there, you will have placed in the best manner all the things on a panel or on a wall, also subdivided by corresponding parallels.(31) This same veil, finally, is of very great help in perfecting a picture, since, in this plane of the veil, you perceive, delineated and depicted, an object itself prominent and swollen. From these things, we can sufficiently understand through reasoning as well

as experimentation what great advantages the veil provides for easy and correct painting.(32)

32 And I will not listen to those who say that it is of very little use to the painter to accustom himself to these things, which, if they also bring very great help in painting, are nevertheless such that, without them, the artist would do scarcely anything by himself. In any case, we do not claim from the painter, if I make no mistake, an infinite labor, but we expect that a painting appears as much as possible in relief and similar to the given bodies, [an objective] that, indeed, I do not well know to what condition, without the support of the veil, someone could ever reach even in a mediocre way. Therefore, let those who wish to progress in painting make use of this cut, that is, of the veil, as I said. **(Fig. 76)** And if one wishes to practice talent without the veil, let them obtain this very calculation of parallels through sight, so that one always imagines a horizontal line cut by a second perpendicular, where they establish in the painting the observed limit. But since the edges of the surfaces are to the inexpert painters most often vague and uncertain, as for example in portraits, those who are not able to calculate in which place the temples divide particularly from the forehead must therefore be instructed through what reasoning they obtain this knowledge of reality. This Nature displays, without doubt, in a clear way. **(Fig. 77)** When we observe on plane surfaces, in fact, that they are recognizable through their own light and shadows, thus also in spherical and concave surfaces we perceive that the same are reduced by squaring, so to speak, in multiple surfaces because of different shapes of shadows and light. One by one, therefore, the parts that differ by light and darkness must be treated as single surfaces. And if a seen surface will have gradually changed from a darkened color toward a bright one, then one needs to indicate with a line the median position between the one and the other space in order that the calculation of the whole area to color is less uncertain.

33 It remains to say something more about the drawing of profiles that certainly relates no less also to composition; one does not need

therefore to ignore what composition is in a painting. Composition, however, is that procedure of depicting according to which the parts are arranged in a work of painting. A very great achievement of the painter is the *historia;* parts of the *historia* are the bodies, part of a body a member, part of a member the surface. Because the drawing of profiles is, in effect, the painting procedure with which the edges are assigned to each one of the surfaces and because some surfaces are small, as [those] of living beings, [and] others very great, as [those] of buildings and of colossal [objects],(33) in delimiting the small surfaces, the principles till now displayed can suffice. It has been shown, in fact, that we estimate excellently the same [principles] through the veil. In drawing, therefore, the profiles of the greater surfaces, one needs to find a new procedure. On this subject, one must keep in mind all the things that first, within rudiments, have been said by us on the surfaces, on the rays, on the pyramid, and on the cut. Finally, you remember the things that I have discussed on the parallels of the pavement and on the centric point and furthermore on the line.(34) **(Fig. 78a)** On the pavement, therefore, represented by parallels, one needs to construct the wings of the walls and whatever surfaces of this kind that we have called surfaces that lean upon [a side].(35) I will briefly say, therefore, what I myself do in this construction. First, I begin from the foundations themselves. I determine, in fact, on the pavement the length and the width of the walls; which in representation I have observed this, without doubt, from Nature: that **(Fig. 78b)** of any body squared with right angles, one cannot see, with a single glance, in relation to the ground, more than two joined surfaces that lean upon [a side].(36) Therefore, in representing the foundations of the walls, I try to grasp only the sides that appear to sight. And in general I always first start from the surfaces nearer, above all, from those that are parallel to the cut. I delimit however these [latter] before the others, and what I want the length and width to be, of these [surfaces] themselves, I establish through the very parallels drawn on the pavement. As many of these *braccia*, in fact, I want [there] to be, I take as

many parallels. In particular, I obtain a middle point of the parallels from the mutual intersection of one and the other diagonals. With this measurement of parallels, therefore, I draw in the best way a middle point, the width and length of the things that rise from the ground. (37) **(Fig. 79)** Hence, then, I also reach the height of the surfaces not in a very difficult way. That whole quantity, in fact, which is the measurement between the centric line and that place of the pavement, whence the mass of an edifice rises, will maintain the same dimension. That is why, if one wants that such quantity, starting from the ground to the top, be four times the height of the depicted man, and the centric line will have been placed at the height of the man, certainly then three will be the *braccia* of the quantity, from the low extremity up to the centric line. You who really wish to increase that quantity up to twelve *braccia* will go upward three times the quantity that there is from the centric line to the lower extremity of the quantity. From these pictorial procedures that we have described we are able, thus, to draw correctly all the surfaces made by angles.

34 It remains to say how one draws, by means of suitable profiles, the circular surfaces. **(Fig. 80a)** The circul surfaces are certainly extracted from the angular [ones]. This [operation] I do in this way. I delimit a small area by means of an equilateral quadrangle at right angles, and I divide the sides of this quadrangle into parts similar to those in which the lower line of the [rectangular] quadrangle in the painting has been divided. And conducting lines from the single points to their opposite [points] of the divisions, I fill the area with small [rectangular] quadrangles;(38) and there I draw a circle, the size I want, so that the circle and the parallels intersect each other reciprocally. And I note suitably all the points of the intersections, positions that I mark in the proper parallels of the pavement depicted in the painting. But since **(Fig. 80b)** it would be an extreme labor to subdivide in minute and almost infinite parallels a whole circle by means of many marks, until obtaining with a numerous marking of points the profile of the circle, for this reason, **(Fig. 81)** as soon as I will have noted eight or how

many intersections one will want, by painting then with diligence, I myself trace the path of the circle in conformity to the indicated limits themselves.(39) **(Fig. 83)** Perhaps the route would be shorter by tracing this profile according to the shadow of a lamp, provided [that] the body that generates shadow receives the light in accordance to a certain calculation and is inserted in the proper place. We have said, therefore, how through the help of parallels one traces the bigger surfaces made by angles and the circular ones. Therefore, having finished every single drawing of the profiles, one needs to speak of the composition. It is necessary to repeat what the composition is.

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The composition is, on the other hand, that procedure of painting whereby, in a work of painting, the parts are composed. The very great achievement of a painter is not a colossus, but the *historia*; the praise of genius is, in fact, greater in a *historia* than in a colossus.(40) Parts of a *historia* [are] the bodies; part of a body is a member; part of a member is the surface. The first parts of a work [are], therefore, the surfaces, because from these are formed the members, from the members the bodies, [and] from the bodies the *historia* from which surely one obtains that outstanding and perfect work of the painter. **(Fig. 84)** From the composition of surfaces arises that exquisite harmony and grace in bodies, which they call beauty. In fact, that face, which would have some large surfaces, others small, there prominent, here excessively recessed from within and hollow, as we see in the faces of little old women, will be ugly to look at. But in the face in which the surfaces will be joined so that pleasing lights flow down into gentle shadows and so that not any roughness of angles appears, rightly we will call this face beautiful and graceful.

In this composition of surfaces, therefore, one must look for, above all, grace and beauty. But [if] in some way we can achieve this, it does not seem to me that there is any other way at all surer than to admire Nature herself and, in general, to examine for a long time and very attentively in what manner Nature, extraordinary master of things, has arranged the surfaces on beautiful members. In imitating

it [Nature], one needs to employ every attention and care and to strongly make use, as we have said, of the veil. And when we wish to realize surfaces in a work, which come from very beautiful bodies, let us always determine previously the limits wherein to direct the lines according to a definite place.

36 Up to this point [we have spoken] of the composition of the surfaces. It remains to report on the composition of the members. Within the composition of the members one needs above all to strive so that each [member] is connected with the others. And certainly one says that they accord beautifully when, in relation to size, to task, to species, to colors, and to all other things, if there are some things of this kind, [the members] correspond until [they get] to grace and beauty.(41) That is why, if in some portraits the head presents itself very large, the chest very small, the hand very broad, the foot swollen, the body stout, such a composition will certainly be deformed to sight. **(Fig. 85)** With regard to the size, therefore, one must observe a certain ratio, which in calculation it is certainly useful, in painting living beings, to screen out at first, by skill, the bones. These, in fact, because they bend very little, always occupy some determined position. It is necessary, then, that the nerves and muscles adhere to appropriate places.(42) And [it is necessary] then, in the end, to treat with flesh and with skin, the bones and the muscles, reclothed. But at this point there will be perhaps certain ones who contest what I said before: the things that are not visible, are of no interest at all to the painter. Without doubt, these [are] right; but as in dressing one first needs to know the nude, which we then envelop encircling it with clothes, so in painting it [i.e., the nude] one needs first to arrange the bones and the muscles that you will cover moderately with flesh and skin in such a way that it is not difficult to sense in which position the muscles are found. Moreover, as Nature herself displays to the common good all these proportions arranged well, so the diligent painter will find no little usefulness in examining them through his own work from Nature herself. Let therefore the studious apply this task in such a way

that the more attention and effort they will have used in examining the proportions of the members, the more they understand that they have been useful to themselves for the purpose of fixing by heart the things that they will have learned. Nevertheless, I must remember just one thing: that, in dimensioning in some way a living being, we select a member of the same being with which we measure all others. **(Fig. 86)** The architect Vitruvius measures the height of a man by means of feet. But I maintain it [to be] more useful if the remaining [members] are referred to the size of the head, although I have observed this: that it is almost common among men that between the chin and the top of the head there exists the same measurement of a foot.

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And so, having selected a single member, one needs to adjust the remaining [members] to this, so that there is not, in a whole living being, any member not proportionate to the others in length and width. One needs, then, to pay attention so that all the members execute their own task in relation to that of which one speaks. It is proper that a runner moves [his] hands not less than [his] feet. I prefer also that while a philosopher speaks, let him, in every member, display modesty of himself rather than [attitudes fit for] a gymnasium. The painter of demes represented a hoplite in a fight so that you would certainly then have said that one was sweating and a second one in the act of placing his arms down in such a way he was even panting.(43) There has also been [a painter] who has depicted Ulysses in such a way that one does not recognize in him true lunacy, but a feigned and false one.(44) **(Fig. 87)** One praises, among Romans, a *historia*, in which dead Meleager is carried and those who are close at hand seem to be afflicted and work with all members. Without doubt, in him who is dead there is not any member that appears alive: namely, that all [the members] hang down, the hands, the fingers, the neck; all descend down languidly. Briefly, all contribute to express the death of the body; [a condition] which is certainly the most difficult of all. In fact, it so concerns an excellent artist to represent in a body members completely at rest as to render them all active and doing something. In

every painting, therefore, one needs to observe this: that each member performs a proper function in relation to that of which one speaks, so that not even the smallest limb is lacking a task according to circumstances, to such a point that the members of the dead appear lifeless to a hair, but indeed all [the members] of the living [appear] active. One says that a body is alive when it performs a certain movement of its own free will. Indeed, they say that there is death when the members are no longer able to sustain vital duties, namely, movement and feeling. Of the bodies, therefore, whom the painter will have wanted the images to appear alive, he will bring about, in these, that all members perform appropriate movements. But in every movement one needs to pursue grace and beauty. These movements of members, furthermore, are full of life and pleasing, in particular those that rend the air above. We have also mentioned then that in composing the members one needs to take in consideration the species. It would in fact be very unlikely if the hands of Helen or Iphigenia appeared aged and rough; or if we assigned a young chest and a delicate neck to Nestor; or if a wrinkled forehead and legs of an athlete to Ganymede; or if to Milo, the most vigorous of all, thin and weak hips. And still, in an image in which the faces are, as they say, full and plump, it would be indecent to add arms and hands thin by emaciation. On the contrary, he who would paint Achaemenides, discovered by Aeneas on an island, with the face that Virgil reports that he had, and the remaining members did not conform to it, would be a very ridiculous and an incapable painter.(45) One needs, therefore, that all [members] are in harmony with the species. I would like, then, that, in color too they correspond among themselves. To those, in fact, who have pink faces, beautiful and white like snow, breasts and all other members dark and gloomy suit very little.

38 In the composition of members, therefore, one must retain these things on size, function, species, and colors: we have spoken enough [of them]. It is appropriate, then, that all things [are] in accordance with the dignity of the subject. In general, it is very unsuitable

for a Venus or for a Minerva to be dressed with a soldier's cloak. It would be indecent that you dress Jupiter or Mars in a woman's clothes. The ancient painters in depicting Castor and Pollux took care, although they were seen as twins, that you could nevertheless discern in the first one the nature of fighters, and in the other agility.(46) Moreover, they also wanted that the defect of limping appeared to Vulcan under [his] clothes, so great was in those [painters] the desire that one needs to express in favor of the function, the species and dignity.(47)

39 The composition of bodies follows, in which consists all [the] ability and praise of a painter. Certainly, some things said about composition of the members concern also this composition; it is necessary, in fact, that all bodies adapt in a *historia* to the task and to the dimension. If you, in fact, will have painted centaurs noisily reunited at dinner, it would be absurd that in such violent turmoil someone reposes made drowsy by wine. And it would also be a mistake if men, [positioned] at equal distance [from us], [were] the ones larger than the others, as if dogs appeared the same [size] as horses in a picture. **(Fig. 88)** One needs, moreover, to blame no less the fact that frequently I see painted men in an edifice, as confined almost in a case, in which they are enclosed hardly seated and obliged to stoop. Let, therefore, all the bodies adapt, in both dimension and function, to what one speaks about.

40 But a *historia* that you can deservedly both praise and admire will be such that it shows itself so agreeable and rich in certain stimuli [as] to attract for a long time the eyes of the instructed spectator, or even illiterate, with a certain sense of pleasure and emotion of the mind.(48) [The] first thing, in fact, that brings pleasure in a *historia* is richness itself and a variety of objects. As, in fact, in food and music, new and extraordinary [things] always delight, not only perhaps because of all other reasons but also and above all for the fact that they differ from those old and customary [things], so the mind feels pleasure exceedingly in every variety and abundance of objects.

In painting, therefore, both the multiplicity of bodies and colors is pleasing. I will say that that *historia* in which old men, younger men, youths, boys, women, maidens, children, domestic animals, puppies, small birds, horses, sheep, edifices, and countries will be present in their own places is very rich. And I will appreciate every richness provided that it conforms to what one speaks about.(49) It happens, in fact, that not only the observers linger in examining objects, but that the painter's richness also gains the consent [of the people]. I would wish that this richness be adorned not only with a certain variety, but [that it be] also solemn and mitigated by dignity and sobriety. I blame, without doubt, those painters who in some way want to appear abundant or perhaps not to have left any space empty; for this [reason], they do not follow any composition but scatter everything in a confused and illogical way. From this, the *historia* does not seem to follow an action but to generate confusion. Or better, perhaps, he [the painter] who will aspire above all to dignity in a *historia* will have to take exceedingly into consideration scarcity. As, in fact, a few number of words produces majesty in a prince, provided that the orders and observations are understood, so an appropriate number of bodies in a *historia* confers dignity; variety carries beauty. I hate emptiness in a *historia*; nevertheless, I praise very little [any] richness which opposes dignity. Indeed, in a *historia* I strongly approve what I see realized by writers of tragedies and comedies when they produce, as much as they are able, a drama with a few characters. In my opinion, there will certainly not be any *historia* expressed with such great variety of things as that which nine or ten figures can represent in a suitable way, as I perceive that the famous thought of Varro, who, to avoid confusion in a banquet, did not admit more than nine participants, applies to this. Nevertheless, in every *historia*, when variety is pleasing, that painting in which expressions and movements of the bodies are very different among themselves is principally agreeable to all. **(Fig. 89)** Then, let some [figures] be standing, visible in whole face, with hands upward and vibrant fingers, supported on one of two feet.

Let others have an opposing face;(50) and let the arms be visible hanging down and feet not connected, and to everyone their own flexions and actions. Let others be seated or rested on a bent knee or let them lie close by. **(Fig. 90)** And let some be nude, if thus it is convenient; let certain ones arrange themselves partly nude, partly veiled, according to a mixed technique [conforming] to each of the two [ways]. (51) But let us always serve modesty and decency. And certainly let the indecent parts of a body and all those that are less graceful be covered by a cloth, or by fronds, or by a hand. **(Fig. 91)** Apelles painted the portrait of Antigonus only from that side of the face where the missing eye did not appear.(52) One reads also that Homer, when he awakes from sleep the shipwrecked Ulysses, makes him advance nude from the wood toward the shouting of the young girls, and that he has given to the man a branch of tree leaves as a covering of [his] obscene body parts.(53) **(Fig. 92)** They report that Pericles had had a long and deformed head and that, therefore, he was usually represented by painters and sculptors not with an uncovered head as others, but hidden with a helmet.(54) Plutarch reports, furthermore, that the ancient painters were accustomed, in painting kings, if there was some defect of form, not wishing it to be omitted but, as far as possible, they corrected it after having preserved the likeness.(55) I, therefore, desire that in the entire *historia* this modesty and decency are considered in such a way that repugnant [features] are omitted or corrected. Finally, as I said, I maintain that one needs to strive in order that one cannot see in anybody almost the same gesture or stance.

(Fig. 93) Then a *historia* will stimulate the observers' hearts when men who were idle will display, to the highest degree, their own activity of the mind.(56) It derives from Nature, in fact – one can find nothing more covetous than her regarding [emotions] similar to ourselves – that we cry with those who cry, we laugh with those who laugh, we grieve with those who suffer.(57) But these motions of the mind are known from movements of the body. We see, in fact, that the downcast – since they are afflicted by thoughts and exhausted

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by malaise – become numb totally in the senses and in powers and they linger lazily among members, pale and more than anything else unstable. In the downcast, in fact, the forehead is pressed, the neck suffering; all things finally fall down as [if they were] exhausted and neglected. In the irate, instead, since they have hearts fired by wrath, both faces and eyes are turbid and red. And in general in the same [subjects], movements of all members are very harshly agitated also, according to the fury of anger.(58) But when we are happy and cheerful then we have movements agile and free for any flexing. One praises Euphranor because in an Alexander he would have realized the face of Paris and a figure in which you could have recognized that famous [Paris] as judge of the goddesses and as the lover of Helen and together as the slayer of Achilles.(59) And extraordinary praise for the painter of the deme is due to the fact that in his paintings are present the angry, the unjust, the inconstant and that, at the same time, you perceive easily both the indulgent and the clement, the merciful, the conceited, the humble, and the fierce. But they report, among all the others, that the Theban Aristides, contemporary of Apelles, had correctly represented these emotions of the heart; that [result] we also, it is without doubt surely, will obtain in an excellent way when we will have placed in this duty the study and diligence as far as [it is] suitable.(60)

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It is necessary, therefore, that the movements of the body are well known to the painter; I maintain that they must be obtained certainly, with great skill, from Nature. It is a very difficult [condition], in fact, to diversify, according to the almost infinite movements of the mind, also the body movements. Unless one is an expert, who will believe, then, when you want to represent smiling faces, that this [feature] is so difficult to avoid, that they do not appear crying rather than happy? And who will be able to express, then, without very great study and diligence, faces in which the mouth, and the chin, and the eyes, and the cheeks, and the forehead, and the eyebrows accord together in grief or joy? All [objects], therefore, must be scrutinized with the

greatest diligence from Nature herself, and one must always imitate [those which are] more evident. And in particular one must paint the [features] that reveal more to the mind that they penetrate deeply, than [the features] which concern the eyes. But let us report some [notions] on movements which, in part, we have realized with our talent and, in part, we have learned from Nature herself. First of all, I maintain it is necessary that all the bodies move among each other in conformity to what one speaks of in accordance with a certain harmony. **(Fig. 94)** It seems opportune then that in the *historia* there is someone who informs the spectators of the things that unfold; or invites with the hand to show; or threatens with severe face and turbid eyes not to approach there, as if he wishes that a similar story remains secret; or indicates a danger or another [attribute] over there to observe; or invites you with his own gestures to laugh together or cry in company. It is necessary, in the end, that also all [the occurrences] that those painted [characters] made with the spectators and with themselves, concur to realize and explain the *historia*. One praises Timanthes of Cyprus [for] that painting with which he surpassed Colotes of Teios for the fact that, having represented, in the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Calchas saddened [and] Ulysses more dejected, and having engaged every art and skill in showing Menelaus afflicted by pain, [and] after having exhausted the states of mind, not knowing in which way to properly render the face of the very sad father, he wrapped his head with rags in order to leave to each one [spectator] a reason to turn the mind to the pain of that [father] more than one could perceive with sight.(61) One praises also a boat in Rome, the one within which our Tuscan painter Giotto represented the eleven [apostles] terrified in fear and by astonishment for the friend whom they saw walk on water; each one showing, in accordance to their own forces, proper indication of perturbed mind in the face and in the whole body, to such a point that the single motions of the states of mind appear in each one.(62) But it is suitable to treat in a very brief way this whole matter of movements.

43 And certainly there are some movements of the mind that the learned call affections, as anger, pain, joy, fear, desire, and so on; and there are other [movements] of the bodies. For example, one says that the bodies move in more ways since – when they increase or diminish, when living beings in good health fall ill in some way, when they recover from an illness, when they change condition – also for reasons of this kind one says that the bodies move.(63) But we painters, who wish to express the states of mind with the movements of the limbs, having left all other discussions, let us speak of that movement which is generated only – they say – when the position changes. **(Fig. 95)** Everything that changes position has seven directions of movement, for example: either upward, or down, or right, or left, or retiring from there into the distance, or turning back toward us. The seventh way of moving, instead, is the one which turns itself around.(64) I desire therefore that in a painting there are all the movements. Let there be some bodies that extend toward us; let others recede away from this part, on the right and on the left. Let, then, some parts of the bodies present themselves opposite to the observers, let others recede, let others rise upward, let others go downward. But since in painting these movements one tends to go most of the time beyond the calculation and the measure, it is useful, at this point, to report some things about the position and movements of the limbs, [occurrences] that I have gathered from Nature herself, from where one clearly understands in which measurement one needs to apply these movements. I have ascertained precisely that in man the whole body, in each of his positions, is subject to the head, the heaviest member of all. If now the same [individual] will rest with [his] whole body on a single foot, this foot is always set like the base of a column, vertically in respect to the head. Indeed, the face of him who is standing almost always turns toward the direction in which the foot itself is pointed. **(Fig. 96)** But I have observed that the movements of the head, at times with difficulty in some directions, are such that [the head] does not always have some parts of the remaining body positioned under

itself, through which [parts] the considerable weight [of the head] is sustained, or that [the head] certainly compels, on the opposite side, as a second supporting staff, some member that compensates [for] the weight. We, in fact, observe the same thing while someone sustains with outstretched hand a certain weight after having fixed one of two feet as an axis of balance, so that the entire other part of the body disposes itself from the opposite side to counterbalance the weight. I have also understood that the head of one who is standing does not turn further up than where the eyes perceive the middle of the sky; neither does it turn toward one of the two sides further than where the chin arrives to touch the shoulder. In that part of the body, then, in which we wear a belt, we can with effort sometimes bend so that we place the forearm in a straight line with the navel. The movements of the legs and of the arms are freer provided that they are not an obstacle to all the other well-distinguished parts of the body. **(Fig. 97)** In these [movements] I have indeed pointed out this from Nature: that the hands almost never rise above the head, nor the elbow above the forearm; that the foot does not rise in height above the knee, neither that the foot is distant from the other much more than is the space of a single foot. **(Fig. 98)** I then examined that if we stretch a hand upward as much as we can, all the remaining parts of that side [of the body] adapt to that movement right to the feet, so that also the heel of the same foot, owing to the movement of the same arm, rises from the ground.

There are very many [notions] very similar to these that a diligent artist will take into consideration; and perhaps those [to] which I myself have referred up to now are evident to such a point that they could seem superfluous. But we did not neglect them, because we observed that very many [painters] make serious mistakes on this subject. In fact, they express too violent movements, and, that is, they do so in a way that in the same figure the breast and buttocks appear under a unique view, a thing which is certainly not only impossible to do but also very unpleasant to see. But the more these [artists] hear that those

images, shaking to the highest degree the limbs, appear very alive, the more they imitate, having neglected any pictorial dignity, the movements of awkward actors. From this, their works are not only devoid of grace and beauty but express also a too restless talent of the artist. The painting must have, in fact, pleasant and gentle movements, and generally suited to what one speaks of. Let the movements and behavior be pleasing in young maidens; let this – adorned by innocence of age and generally delightful – exude a condition of sweet quiet rather than agitation, although Homer, of whom Zeuxis was a follower, had preferred also, within women, a very vigorous appearance.(65) In an adolescent, let the movements be more agile and pleasing, with a certain revelation of gallant heart and of energies. Let the movements in a man be more firm and [his] attitudes completely endowed with agile deftness.(66) Let all the movements in old men be slow and the attitudes themselves tired, so that they do not only support the body on both feet but also remain clinging to something with the hands. Let one assign, finally, to each one, according to the condition, the appropriate movements of the body in compliance with those motions of the mind that you wish to express. It is necessary, then, that in limbs the most important symptoms of great emotions of the mind are present. And surely, this procedure concerning the movements is completely common to every living being. In fact, it is not appropriate that an ox with a plough uses those movements which Bucephalas, Alexander's thoroughbred horse [used]. But we will appropriately paint the celebrated daughter of Inachus, who was transformed into a cow, while she was running, perhaps with the head up, feet raised, and tail twisted.(67)

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Let these [occurrences], briefly analyzed concerning the movement of living beings, suffice. Now, instead, because I also think that in a painting of inanimate [objects] all those movements which we have spoken of are necessary, I maintain that one must say under what condition [they] develop from there. Certainly, the represented movements of the hair, and of horses' manes, and of branches, and of

leaves, and of clothes give a pleasing impression in painting. **(Fig. 99)** I desire, indeed, that [the depiction of] hair be treated according to all those seven movements which I spoke of. Let [the hair], in fact, swirl attempting to make a knot; or better still, let it wave in the air while it imitates flames, and let it coil on some heads; let it rise sometimes in this or that direction. **(Fig. 100)** And in the same manner, let bends and curves of branches be partly arched upward, partly be receding, and partly coiling as ropes. **(Fig. 101)** And let one apply this very thing in the folds of fabrics in a way that, as from the trunk of a tree the branches spread in all directions, so from a fold the [other] folds spring according to their own ramifications. And in these, let all the same movements develop also in such a way that there is not any extension of fabric in which there are not almost all the same movements. But, let all the motions be – what, most of the times, I advise – temperate and practicable, and let them show grace rather than admiration of labor. **(Fig. 102)** Now then, when we wish that clothes adapt to the movements and, generally, when dresses, heavy by their own nature and all falling without interruption toward the ground, do not present folds at all, for this [reason] one will rightly place in a corner of the *historia* the face of a Zephyr or of an Auster that blows among the clouds, from where all the clothes that are opposite are struck. From this, one will present that loveliness: that the flanks of bodies which the wind hits appear almost nude under the covering of fabric, since the clothes stick to the body because of the wind. On the contrary, from the other sides, fabrics, stirred by wind, will wave appropriately in the air. But, in this battering of the wind, let one avoid this: that some movement of clothes rise against the wind and that [they] be neither too resistant or too excessive. Therefore, these things said on the movements of living beings and of inanimate [objects] must be greatly observed by the painter. And, furthermore, one must execute with diligence all those [conditions] that we have examined in the composition of surfaces, of the members, and of the bodies.

46 Therefore two parts of painting have been completed by us: the drawing of profiles and composition. It remains to talk about the reception of light. In the rudiments we have sufficiently demonstrated how much force [the sources] of light have [for] the purpose of variation of colors. In fact, without changing the kinds of colors, we have instructed that the colors become sometimes more vivid, sometimes more dull in accordance with the intensity of light and shadows, in particular, that black and white are those by means of which we express light and shadows in painting; and, on the contrary, all other [colors] – to which the variations of light and shade apply – are considered as substance. Having left all other things, one now needs to explain on what condition the painter must utilize black and white. It causes astonishment that the ancient painters Polygnotus and Timanthes have used only four colors, and that Aglaophon was content simply with one, as if – within such a large number of colors, as they believed it was – it is modest that the same excellent painters chose so few for [their] use; and, by consequence, one maintains that it is abundant for an artist to use together a whole multitude of colors in accordance with a work. (68) Without doubt I affirm that the wealth and variety of colors are greatly useful to the grace and beauty of a picture. But, this is what I would want: let the prepared painters consider that the highest quality and mastery reside only in the distribution of black and white and that – in having to place accurately these two – one must devote all talent and zeal. As, in effect, the incidence of light and shadows shows in which place surfaces swell up, or where they shrink by hollowing out, or how much every part moves aside or strays, so the distribution of black and white produces what became praised in the Athenian painter Nicias or what an artist must greatly look for: that his painted objects appear very much to protrude.(69)

They say that Zeuxis, a very celebrated and very ancient painter,(70) had exercised, as almost like a prince, this exact calculation of light and shadow. This praise, nevertheless, has not ever been

attributed to others. Certainly, I will consider insignificant or mediocre that painter who does not understand clearly how much power every shadow and light produce[s] on each surface. With the consent of both the ignorant and the expert, I will praise those portraits that seem to protrude as [if] sculpted from pictures, and I will condemn, on the contrary, those [portraits] in which any technique does not shine forth, if not perhaps in the drawing. I would like that a composition be well drawn and excellently colored. Therefore, in order that [painters] avoid blame and deserve praise, light and shadows, first of all, must be noted with great diligence; and one must remember that a color itself is more vivid and clear in a surface in which bright rays strike and that, moreover, the force of the light diminishing gradually therefrom, the same color becomes a little darker. **(Fig. 103)** One needs, then, to observe how the shadows always correspond to light on the opposite side, in order that [when] in any body a surface is illuminated by light you can discover in this same [body] opposing surfaces covered by shadows. But for what concerns the depiction of light with white and of shadows with black, I urge [the painter] to devote particular attention in order to recognize the surfaces that are covered by light or by shadow. This thing you will certainly learn in an excellent way from Nature and from the objects themselves. Only when you will have observed them well, whereas you modify a color by a very light white, in a most as possible parsimonious way, at the right place inside the profiles, there you will also add black in the same way, on the opposite side, in the appropriate place. In fact, he who allows that prominent [features] emerge through this distribution, so to speak, of black and white, becomes more discerning. Follow, then, with equal parsimony in the additions until you perceive that you have achieved what is sufficient. Certainly, a mirror will be an excellent judge to examine this result. And even I do not know how objects depicted without errors become pleasing in a mirror. It is surprising, moreover, that every imperfection of a painting appears more deformed in a mirror.

Let, therefore, [objects] taken from Nature be corrected through the control of a mirror.

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(Fig. 104) Let it be consented, at this point, to report some things that we have taken from Nature. I have observed, without doubt, that flat surfaces maintain color in a uniform way in every part of their own [surface], whereas spherical and concave surfaces change colors; in fact, here it is clearer, there it is darker, while on another side one observes a sort of intermediate color. This color alteration, then, in nonflat surfaces is a source of difficulties for indolent painters. But if a painter, as we have taught, will have outlined in the correct way [the] edges of surfaces and will have recognized the areas of light, then certainly the calculation of coloration will be easy. Through, so to speak, a very light dewdrop [of color,] in fact, he will modify first this surface, according to necessity, with white or with black, until the line of separation. Later on, he will continue adding, on this side of the line, so to speak, a second sprinkling; after this, another on this side of this and again another on this side of the same in order that not only a clearer part is depicted through a brighter color but also in order that in its turn the same color is diluted, almost like smoke, in adjoining areas. But it is necessary to remember that no surface must be rendered white to such a point that you cannot render the same [surface] many times even whiter. Also, in representing clothes themselves, white as snow, one needs to keep a long way off from the extreme whiteness. The painter, in fact, has nothing other than white with which to imitate the greatest brightnesses of the very neat surfaces and has available only black with which to express the deepest darknesses of night. Therefore, in painting white clothes one needs to select, [to begin,] from the four kinds of colors, a color which certainly is clear and bright. And contrary to this case itself, in painting perhaps a black mantle, we will select a second extreme color which is not very different from [the] darkness, for example, of the deep and murky sea. In the end, only this combination of black and white has the power, in a painting executed as a rule of art and with method,

of showing very splendid golden and silver surfaces, and even of glass. The painters who utilize white excessively and black in an inappropriate way are therefore to be vehemently blamed. For this reason, I would like that white be purchased by painters at a price higher than very precious gems. In order that they become very stingy, it would certainly be useful [to know] that black and white originated from those huge pearls of Cleopatra that she purified with vinegar. In fact, the works would be both more gracious and closer to the truth. Nor can one easily express how much frugality and moderation should be in distributing white in a painting. Hence, also, Zeuxis used to reprove painters because they ignored what consisted of too much excess.(71) That is why, if one must be indulgent toward error, they who utilize black beyond measure must be blamed less than those who utilize white a bit excessively. In fact, from Nature herself we learn to detest, day by day through painting practice, a gloomy and dark work. And immediately after, the more we understand, the more we train the hand to be disposed to grace and beauty. This way, by means of Nature, we all love manifest and clear [objects]. The way must be blocked, therefore, more in that part where it appears more prone to error.

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Let these [matters], said up to this point on the use of black and white, be enough. One must, instead, add some reflection also on kinds of colors. It remains, therefore, to express several [notions] on the kinds of colors, certainly not as did the architect Vitruvius on what place one finds the best clay and excellent colors, but in what manner one must employ the chosen and most common colors in a painting.(72) They say that Euphranor, an ancient painter, has written something on colors, works which no longer exist in our days.(73) We, instead, who have brought to light, risen from the realm of the dead, this art of painting, whether once it has been described by others, or whether it has been extracted from this world [of the living], never treated by anyone, let us continue the topic as we have done till now, according to our talent in conformity with the established

undertaking.(74) I would like that the kinds of colors and, as far as it is possible, that all species, be contemplated with a certain grace and agreeableness. Grace, without doubt, will result when colors will be combined with colors with a certain accurate diligence, as, for example, if you paint Diana while she leads choruses, it is convenient that green clothes are assigned to this nymph, to that next one white, to this one who precedes, purple, to [the other] who follows, yellow.(75) And one after another, let them be dressed, indeed, according to a variety of such colors, that bright colors always match with some dark colors of a different kind. This combination of colors, in fact, will certainly make more lovely both beauty, starting from variety, and splendor, starting from comparison. Well, there is certainly some bond among colors in the way that one, with respect to the other, increases the grace and beauty of the adjacent [color]. If red color is halfway between blue and green, it adds a certain reciprocal ornament to [the] one and to the other. Certainly, white warrants vivacity not only [when] placed between green and yellow but to almost all colors. Dark colors, instead, stand not without incisive quality among the light ones, and light [colors], in general, in accordance to an analogous relationship, are placed agreeably between the dark ones. The painter, therefore, in a *historia* will have available the variety of colors of which I have spoken.

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But, there are those who utilize gold in a disproportionate way because they think that gold lends a certain majesty to the *historia*. I do not approve of them at all. Indeed, if I would like to paint Virgil's Dido with a golden quiver, [who] kept [her] hair in a knot with a golden clasp, [for] whom a golden band girded [her] dress, and who rode with golden reins, and, in general, all things shone because of the gold, I [would] strive, nevertheless, to imitate by means of colors rather than by means of gold that abundance of golden rays that strikes observers' eyes from every part.(76) In fact, as the admiration and greater praise of an artist is based on colors, thus also one can observe that, after you have placed gold on a flat table, the major parts of [those] surfaces

that one needed to represent as bright and brilliant appear dark to the observers; and others [surfaces], perhaps, which should be darker, result more luminous. I will certainly not condemn all the other ornaments of artisans, as [are], of course, the [framing] sculpted columns around [the painting], the bases, and the pediments that one adds to a painting, also if they will be in silver and in solid gold or in a very pure gold completely. A perfect and finished *historia*, in fact, is very worthy also of the ornament of gems.

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Till this point the three parts of painting have been treated very briefly by us. We have talked about the drawing of profiles of minor and major surfaces. We have talked about the composition of members and of bodies. We have talked about colors for what concerns the use that – we thought – was of interest to the painter. The whole painting has therefore been exposed by us; we have certainly said it bases itself on these three things: the drawing of profiles, the composition, and the reception of light.