

# Camilla Guerrieri's *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*: Symbols of Honor and Power\*

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The Altomani & Sons Collection owns a remarkable newly discovered portrait of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574)*, a historical military figure who was a *condottiere*, ruler of Urbino, Commander-in-chief of the Papal Estate, and Perfect of Rome, as well as a collector and patron of the Fine Arts. Camilla Guerrieri Nati (1628-1694), a seventeenth-century Italian painter from Fossombrone (in the province of Pesaro and Urbino), portrayed this heroic personage surrounded by emblems associated with his military courage and leadership, including his plumed burgonet helmet, metal gilded armor, a necklace with the golden fleece, and batons of secular and religious dominions. This oil painting on copper—considered a precious metal at the time—emphasizes the importance of the commission. The material and technique also reveals a unique artistic achievement in that it provides the painting with a smooth, reflective surface and vibrant coloration, symbolizing precious imagery.

**Keywords:** Camilla Guerrieri, Della Rovere Family, Negrolì Family, Minerva, Mars, military portrait, armor, baton, helmet, oil on copper, dolphin and oak symbolism

## Methodology

The approach to the iconographic study of this exquisite portrait entails, first and foremost, establishing the painting's provenance and condition as a source of historical evidence for attribution. Subsequently, the artist's accomplishments and her art historical contributions will be assessed by investigating the existing literature on her oeuvre. This includes exploring both literary references during Camilla's lifetime and modern scholarship on some of her known paintings and patronage. Given the limited information on this female artist, it is imperative to scrutinize her newly discovered painting in terms of visual analysis and symbolic significance. This art historical iconographic and emblematic method facilitates the contextualization of the artist and the interpretation of the painting's symbolism within the cultural framework of the period. The present study is primarily concerned with a detailed analysis of the symbolic significance of various motifs in Camilla's portrait. Specifically, this analysis

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will focus on multiple military instruments, specifically armor, batons, helmets, and clothes of honor, and motifs associated with the portrayal of individual leadership and governmental power. The jeweled golden fleece that hangs from his neck refers to the recognition of his achievements and outstanding courage.

### Introduction

The Altomani & Sons Collection owns a remarkable newly found portrait of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574)*, a historical military figure who was a *condottiere*, ruler of Urbino, Commander-in-chief of the Papal Estate, and Perfect of Rome, as well as a collector and patron of the fine arts (Figure 1a). Camilla Guerrieri Nati (1628-1694), a seventeenth-century Italian painter from Fossombrone, a commune in the provinces of Pesaro and Urbino, portrayed this heroic personage surrounded by emblems associated with his military courage and leadership, including his plumed burgonet helmet, armor, batons, and golden fleece pendant (Cheney, 2022, pp. 176-192). This oil painting on copper—considered a precious metal at the time—emphasizes the importance of the commission. The material and technique also reveals a unique artistic achievement in that it provides the painting with a smooth, reflective surface and vibrant coloration.



Figure 1a. Camilla Guerrieri, *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, oil on copper canvas, 14 x 10.3 cm. Collection of Altomani & Sons, Pesaro. Photo credit: Altomani & Sons, Pesaro.



Figures 1b and 1c. Camilla Guerrieri, *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, det., gilded the frame with oak branches and leaves. Collection of Altomani & Sons, Pesaro. Photo credit: Altomani & Sons, Pesaro.

This delicate oil on copper (14 x 10.2 cm) is part of the art collection of the antique dealer Altomani & Sons in Pesaro. This painting underwent professional cleaning by the Studio di Restauro Isidoro and Matteo Bacchiocca di Urbino, which provided a beautiful, rich surface coloration and rendering of details. Claudio Giardini's identification and attribution of this work provide insights into Camilla Guerrieri's art and assists in furthering her scholarship (Giardini, 1999, 2008).

The essay consists of a brief historical account of Guidobaldo II della Rovere and an interpretation of Camilla Guerrieri's emblematic symbolism in this portrait of a nobleman and fierce *condottiere*. In this essay, I shall refer to the artist by her first name, Camilla, so as not to confuse her with her father, the painter Giovanni Francesco Guerrieri (1589-1655).

### **Guidobaldo II della Rovere**

Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574), came from the prestigious Rovere family, whose coat of arms represents an oak tree, hence the appellation of the family after the Italian word for oak, *rovere*. He was a noble *condottiere* who succeeded his father, Francesco Maria I della Rovere (1490-1538), as Duke of Urbino in 1538 until his death. His mother was Eleonora Gonzaga (1493-1543), Duchess of Urbino. He married Giulia da Varro (1523-1547), Princess of Camerino, and had two children, but only her daughter survived, Virginia Feltria della Rovere (1541/1544-1571).

His union with Giulia caused havoc in the papacy because Pope Paul III (1468-1549, Farnese Family) had planned for Giulia to marry his grandson, Ottavio Farnese in order to control the Duchy of Camerino. Hence, the pope excommunicated Guidobaldo from the Church. After complex political negotiations, Guidobaldo annexed the Duchy of Camerino to the Papal States.

Guidobaldo received many martial posts as a military leader. Notably, in 1546, the *condotta* was used as an army manager (*governatore*) for the troops of the Republic of Venice. After Giulia's unfortunate death in 1547, he married Vittoria Farnese (1519-1602, granddaughter of Pope Paul III). This new union, accepted by the papacy, provided him with new military honors, such as being appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the Papal Estate and Prefect of Rome. He fought many battles, including the League of Lepanto, where he was hired as a *capitano generale* for the King of Spain, Philip II (1527-1598), in the war against the Ottoman Turks in 1559. He was rewarded by the King of Spain in 1561 with the worthy golden fleece because of his audacious military conduct. Guidobaldo was assassinated in 1574 following a revolt in his Duchy of Urbino against oppressive taxation.

In contrast to his military accomplishments and early pursuits, Guidobaldo continued the family's tradition of supporting the arts and making his dominion a cultural center. His well-known relative, Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere, 1443-1513), was a passionate collector and patron of the arts, supporting artists like Michelangelo and Raphael. In the same vein, Guidobaldo commissioned portraits from Titian and acquired Titian's *Venus of Urbino* of 1534, oil on canvas, now at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence (Biganti, 2005, pp. 123-125; Eze, Hayes, Kennedy, & Verstegen, 2021a).

### **Camilla Guerrieri's *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere***

Records and inventories confirm that Camilla was assigned to copy portraits of famous noble people, either out of a collector's desire or for propaganda. It has been suggested by scholars, based on poorly legible inscriptions of a seventeenth inscription, that a nobleman, Girolamo Giordani from Pesaro, commissioned Camilla to copy portrait paintings of the Della Rovere Family (Vernarecchi, 2020, p. 57; Giardini, 2008, p. 27; Fontebuoni, 1981, pp. 1-19; Verstegen, 2021b, pp. 43-54; Massari & Maria, 2006, pp. 433-434). The commission requested thirteen portraits, but only ten were completed. To confuse matters further regarding this commission, the artist signed some of these works as "Camilla Guerrieri De Dinatis Pinxit Pisauri 1658" ("Camilla Guerrieri painted the Pesaro dynasty in 1658") (Giardini, 2008, p. 24). This inscription was copied and modified from the *verso* of a previous della Rovere portrait.

Many artists painted portraits of Guidobaldo II as he was a famous historical military figure. Notable among these are the Florentine Mannerist painter Agnolo Bronzino's *Guidobaldo II della Rovere* of 1532, oil on wood, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti in Florence (Eisenbichler, 1988, pp. 13-20; Verstegen, 2021a, pp. 70-74). Titian, the renowned Venetian painter, painted several portraits, notably *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino* of 1545, oil on canvas, now at Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, CT (Verstegen, 2021a, pp. 74-80), and *Guidobaldo II della Rovere and His Son* of 1550s, oil on canvas, in a Private Collection (Eze, 2021, pp. 45-74). There is also a painting controversially attributed to Taddeo Zuccaro, *Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, c. 1560, oil on canvas, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna (Verstegen, 2021b, p. 51). However, the Bolognese



Museum records suggested a painter from the Marche, whose date was in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> This indicates an alignment with attribution to Camilla Guerrieri, a painter from Fossombrone in the Marche region who worked in the seventeenth century.

This collection of portrait imagery of the Duke of Urbino includes Camilla's *Guidobaldo II della Rovere*. However, her portrayal and interpretation are based on observing other painters' renditions, since the *condottiere* was deceased at this point. Hence, her portrayal relies on previous representations. Even so, she injects an inventive composition into her conception, filled with emblematic and symbolic references. Camilla composed several versions of this subject; some unattributed should be considered as her creation. For example, the portrait of Guidobaldo in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574), With his Armor by Filippo Negrolì*, unattributed and dating to 1580-85 (Figures 2a and 2b). This painting has a Latin inscription on the reverse, within a scrolling banderole: GUIDOBALDVS / URB.' / DUX. V. (Guidobaldo of Urbino, Fifth Duke), and at an earlier date belonged to the Collection Altomani and Sons before being purchased and then gifted to the Metropolitan Museum by Arthur Ochs Sulzberger in 2009.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2a. Unattributed, *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, c. 1580-1585, oil on copper.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.  
Credit Line: Purchase, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Gift, 2009.



Figure 2b. Unattributed, *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, c. 1580-1585, verso with inscription, oil on copper.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.  
Credit Line: Purchase, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Gift, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> This version is also attributed to an unknown painter from Le Marche. See Anna Maria Ambrosini Massari, *Catalogo Generale. Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna* (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), 2. *Da Raffaello ai Carracci*, pp. 433-34, Entry n. 288.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/35155> and conversation with Simona Marelli of the Collection of Altomani on 24 July 2024.

The Municipality of Senigallia in the province of Ancona, Italy, houses a limited rendition of a bust that is portrait-length without attributes, titled *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino (1514-1574)* (undated) (Figure 3).<sup>3</sup> Another version is Camilla's painting of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere* [1658], oil on canvas, 37.5 x 31 cm., originally from the Collezione Machirelli–Giordani in the Palazzo Mosca Musei Civici in Pesaro (inv. 3054), but now in the storage at the Museo Civico in Pesaro (Figure 4).<sup>4</sup>



Figure 3. Camilla Guerrieri, *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, n.d., oil on copper. Municipality of Senigallia, Ancona, Italy. Photo credit: GianLuca Gasparini, Photographer.



Figure 4. Camilla Guerrieri, *Guidobaldo II Della Rovere*, 1658, oil on canvas, 37.5 x 31 cm. Museo Civico, Pesaro. Photo courtesy: Museo Civico, Pesaro.

The version in this discussion is the remarkable portrait of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino* of [1658], oil on copper, in the Collection of Altomani & Sons at Pesaro (Figure 1a, 1b, and 1c).<sup>5</sup> Research by the curator of the Collection of Altomani and Sons, Simona Marelli, indicates that the frame is original; it was manufactured by a wood framer from Pesaro/Marche in the seventeenth century. The frame's design resembles the Venetian border decoration style (Penny, 2010). The Altomani's beautiful, gilded frame borders are incised with oak branches and leaves leaf motifs, recalling the patron's name, della Rovere (durmast or oak) (Figures 1b and 1c).

<sup>3</sup> There is limited information about the provenance and data on Camilla's portrait. We are grateful for the scanned image by the photographer Gianluca Gasparini.

<sup>4</sup> Fontebuoni, *Ritratti dei Della Rovere di Camilla Guerrieri*, p. 16, suggests that there is another similar version at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Inv. n. 179) attributed to an anonymous painter; Giardini, *Camilla Guerrieri 1628-post 1690*, pp. 57-58; and Francesca Banini's entry and research on "Scheda Parziale dell'Opera," Museo Civico di Pesaro, 30 July 2024, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the portrait versions at the Metropolitan and Altomani are the same size: 5 1/2 x 4 in. (14 x 10.2 cm); frame: 7 1/8 x 4 7/8 in. (18.1 x 12.5 cm).

### The Oil Copper Canvas and the Gilded Frame

The materials composing the portrait—the gilded frame and the oil on the copper surface—indicate that Camilla was conscious of the personage she was portraying and wanted to create a painting that incorporated the physical aspects of this famous noble patron. The gilded frame, perhaps designed by her and carved by a wood framer, contains oak branches with leaves inside the borders, an emblem of the Rovere family. The oak has a long-standing tradition of symbolism (D'Ancona, 1977, p. 250). In Roman mythology, the oak had two symbolic allusions. It was considered the sacred tree of Jupiter, King of the Gods (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.106), and employed for prophecy. The second allusion was profane, and was associated with civic pride, human courage, and honor (*virtù*); for instance, crowning a person with an oak wreath or with oak leaves for a heroic act (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6. 772) or for being a winner in a competition such as a music context (Juvenal, *Satirae*, 6.386).

In Camilla's painting, the decoration of the frame intentionally reveals the historical symbolism of oak branches and leaves. This not only references the family's name, Rovere, but also serves as a metaphorically ethical signification of a symbol of *virtù*, representing the heroic and civic accomplishments of Guidobaldo, the condottiere and ruler of Urbino.

The second physical aspect of the painting is the use of copper instead of wood or canvas for the portrait (Komanecy, 1999). Copper also has a dual meaning associated with visual preciousness and durability. In Latin, the name refers to "the metal of Cypress," the metal found on the island of Venus, the Goddess of Beauty and Love. Venus is also considered to be of dual nature, a divinity and a planetary force, because copper is associated with one of the planetary ages (Biedermann, 1994), p. 76). Copper was used to make coins, which functioned as monetary and propaganda instruments. Many Roman Emperors used coins as a symbol of power, displaying on the recto the emperor's portrait with the coin's value, and on the verso, a symbolic image or mythological figure alluding to the ruler's virtue. There is an intriguing similarity between using metal to symbolize a ruler's authority, the front side of the copper coin featuring the emperor's likeness, and the copper portrait depicting the renowned *condottiere* Guidobaldo. Camilla used this copper support to create a powerful symbolic image and a visually stunning effect. The smooth surface of the copper provides reflective and luminous effects. The metal's properties allowed for the easy application of natural colors from gemstones and minerals, such as azurite for a bluish and silvery coloration and malachite for bright green effects. Hence, Camilla honored the memory of a great hero from Urbino through artistic techniques, physical materials, and colors.

### The Attire

Camilla's celebratory or memorial portrait of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere* is intriguingly constructed in two parts. The foreground shows Guidobaldo in a vague sitting or standing stance. His partially balding head contrasts with his attractive face, featuring a groomed brown beard and mustache in the style of the milieu. His piercing blue eyes and intense gaze convey a deliberate pose. He is dressed in his finest attire as an Italian nobleman. He is wearing a black satin cloak adorned with velvet and brown fur on the shoulders and arms. Underneath, he has a black velvet vest trimmed with brown fur. His collar and sleeves are framed by frilly white lace. A long black velvet cord in the form of a necklace holds a brooch depicting a golden fleece, the ram, with a ruby stone at its center. He holds leather gloves in his right hand while pointing his index finger to his masculinity.

With his left hand, he grips the handle of an ornate golden sword, a symbol of military honor and power, and an active force in a masculine principle.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Golden Fleece**

The golden fleece stands out in the center of Guidobaldo's attire. This honorific brooch is associated with authority and royalty as part of the historic Knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Catholic Order of Chivalry, granted in 1561 by Philip II, King of Spain, to Guidobaldo. The golden fleece was a flying, winged ram, metaphorically associated with several ancient sagas that have been recounted since Homer's *Odyssey* (eighth century BCE) (Lang, 1993, p. 612). Hermes, the Messenger of the Gods, is sent to provide a magic golden ram to rescue two children of the king of Boetia from death. Because of the animal's noble act, the ram was sacrificed to the god, who gifted the ram to become part of the constellation of Aries. In addition, the ram's skin was preserved in an oak grove sacred to Aries. The oak tree was guarded by a dragon who never slept. In *Argonautica*, Apollonius of Rhodes (third century BCE) recounts the saga, associating the skin of the flayed golden ram with a woven fabric of golden silk, telling how Jason and the Argonauts were to steal this golden fleece as an act of heroism in order to reconquer the political power and rulership of Iolcus (Thessaly, Greece) (Hunter, 1993).

Camilla employed these ancient sagas about heroism, symbolically associated with Guidobaldo's persona, both as a military hero and the ruler of Urbino. Interestingly, the ancient golden fleece was hung in an oak tree. His family name, Della Rovere, means oak tree. Therefore, the brooch of the golden fleece in Guidobaldo's attire symbolizes both his family name and heroic actions, honoring his family and the Duchy of Urbino.

### **The Green Cloth of Honor**

The foreground of the portrait is framed by the background with military honorific objects—batons, cuirass, plumed helmets, and attributive regalia, including the cloth of honor, exalting Guidobaldo as a heroic *condottiere*. Camilla ingeniously selected a malachite green color for the cloth of honor behind Guidobaldo. The green color purposely alludes to the color of plant life and vitality—the oak's branches and leaves—and also the heraldic green color that symbolizes the family's name, hope, and freedom (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 217; Simmonds, Howes, & Irving, 2016, p. 159; Biedermann, 1994, p. 74). The theatrical curtain with golden fringes, pulled to the right, functions as an opening, creating a stage to announce an important personage, in this case, to reveal the attributes of the hero: a plumed helmet on the left, and the cuirass with batons on the right.

### **The Helmet**

Camilla placed his heraldic helmet on the cloth of honor behind Guidobaldo's figure (Figure 1a). Her helmet consists of two parts: a decorative plumage similar to those seen in helmets worn by ancient Roman military leaders during ceremonial events and by soldiers in Renaissance jousts. The body of the helmet is made of silver and alloys forged through metalworking. Imaginative decorative motifs featuring colorful white and gold plumage and fantastical sea creatures evoke the grandeur of the court of Urbino and its ruler Guidobaldo.

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<sup>6</sup> The courtier and diplomat from Urbino, Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), wrote a book called *Il Cortegiano* in 1528. The book focused on ethics and civilized behavior for both male and female nobility and military soldiers serving royal rulers. Castiglione emphasized the importance of masculinity in a *condottiere*. See Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1528), p. 26; and Carolyn Springer, *Armour and Masculinity in the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 73.



The helmet recalls a type of *vestiaria* from the ancients, primarily that of Pliny the Elder and Tacitus, but also found among the modern Machiavelli, and his visual familiarity with ancient and Renaissance artistic representations of military *vestiaria*. Two types of helmets were used during Guidobaldo's time: the historical or military and the heraldic or celebratory, as seen in battles (Robinson, 1975). The ornate burgonet seen in Camilla's portrait is a heraldic helmet that was not used in combat but has a significant impact because its extravagant designs recalls the persona who wore it—Guidobaldo (Cheney, 2022, pp. 176-192). In designing this type of heraldic helmet, Camilla reveals her familiarity with metallurgy workshops, collections of arms and armors, and designs of Renaissance artists who were also fascinated with the depiction of fanciful helmets with a dolphin design. Undoubtedly, in her stay in 1664 in Florence (Vernarecchi, 1892/2020, p. 58), Camilla saw the polychromed glaze terracottas in the workshop of the Della Robbia Family where a helmet is decorated at the top with a large dolphin, as seen in the *Head of Darius III, King of Persia* of 1520-1525, a medallion, now in National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon (Figure 5) and attributed to Andrea della Robbia (1435-1525) or his assistant Benedetto Buglioni (1461-1521). Another example of a dolphin visible on the crest of the helmet is the *Head of a Warrior*, c. 1520, glazed terracotta, now in The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Russia, perhaps also by Buglioni after a copy of Andrea Verrocchio's *Head of a Warrior* of c. 1488.<sup>7</sup> The terracotta was carefully restored after being severely damaged during WWII—a photograph before the war shows the original work (Figures 6a and 6b).



Figure 5. Benedetto Buglioni or Andrea della Robbia Workshop, *Head of Darius III, King of Persia*, 1520-1525, polychromed glazed terracotta, 82 x 73 cm. National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon. Photo courtesy: National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon. Credit line: Chigo Roli/Photo 12, Photographer.

<sup>7</sup> This type of helmet design probably inspired the Profile of Warrior in Helmet of 1475-1480 drawing by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), who was working in Verrocchio's workshop. The drawing is now at the British Museum in London; for the image, see [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1895-0915-474](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1895-0915-474).



Figures 6a and 6b. Andrea Verrocchio or Benedetto Buglioni, *Head of a Warrior*, c.1488, glazed terracotta. Pre-WWII photo and today's restoration. The Pushkin, State Museum of Fine Arts, Russia. Photo courtesy: The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts.

As a cultivated artist, she was aware of the drawings of Florentine artists on the subject and the drawings of Helmets and Minerva in the *Ionane* Iacomo dal Conte's *Libro del Sarto* (Figures 7a and 7b), now in the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice (1520-1592).<sup>8</sup> This famous Milanese tailor's book on clothing designs included patterns for the latest fashions, horse barding (body armor for war horses), pavilions for jousts, banners, helmets, and other attire.

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<sup>8</sup> A facsimile edition was published in Ediciones Grial in 2004. I am grateful to Prof. Damiani Acciarino of the University of Ca' Foscari in Venice for the images and information about this manuscript. See also the *Fanciful Helmet* of 1545 by Francesco Salviati (1510-1562), now in the Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe in Florence, for the image, see <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/301107925076662083>; *The Head of Minerva* of 1540 by Giulio Clovio (1482-1578), now in Royal Collection at Windsor, for the image, see <https://www.wga.hu/art/c/clovio/z3minerv.jpg>; and the *Defence of Ponte Rozzo on the River Ticino* (1524), a pen-and-ink drawing date 1550 by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), now at the Warsaw University Library in Warsaw, Poland, for the image, see <https://www.1st-art-gallery.com/Giorgio-Vasari/Defence-Of-Ponte-Rozzo-On-The-River-Ticino-In-1524.html>



Figure 7a. Helmets, drawing, *The Libro del Sarto della Fondazione Querini Stampaglia di Venezia* (1520-1592). Photo courtesy: Prof. Damiano Acciarino.



Figure 7b. Minerva, drawing. *The Libro del Sarto della Fondazione Querini Stampaglia di Venezia* (1520-1592). Photo courtesy: Prof. Damiano Acciarino.

The type of heraldic helmet—ornate burgonet—was popularized in the sixteenth century by the renowned Milanese armorer Filippo Negroli (1510-1579), who formed a famous workshop to create military armor and helmets with fanciful decorations embossed figural, flora, and fauna. Some of these metal helmets were encrusted with gold and silver for ceremonial events, parades, and festivals. Negroli also included mythological and historical scenes in these helmets (Phyrr, Godoy, & Leydi, 1999, p. 47; Williams, 1999, pp. 101-124; Breiding, 2000). In Guidobaldo's helmet, Camilla assimilated the delight of creating a ceremonial helmet for a heroic person as seen in the helmets in the Negroli workshop, in particular, in Giovanni Paolo Negroli's (1513-1569) *Helmet (burgonet) in the form of a Dolphin Mask*, 1540-1545, iron or steel, repoussé embossed, and chiseled, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.





Figure 8. Giovanni Paolo Negrolì, *Helmet (burgonet) in the form of a Dolphin Mask*, 1540-1545, iron/steel, repoussé and chiseled. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy: National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Credit Line: Widener Collection.



Figure 1a. Camilla Guerrieri, *Helmet, det. Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, oil on copper canvas, (14 x 10.3 cm). Collection of Altomani & Sons, Pesaro. Photo credit: Altomani & Sons, Pesaro.

There is a claim that this finely crafted helmet may have belonged to Francis I, the King of France (Oplothea, 1816/2010, pp. 12-13; Scalini, 1987, pp. 34, 40). It was based on a design by Leonardo Da Vinci and cast by the Florentine goldsmith and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571). The beautifully crafted metallic helmet exudes fierceness, with a dolphin's head, wide-open mouth, and piercing eyes. The crests formed by the dolphin's tail emphasize the overall arabesque ornamentation throughout the helmet.

For Guidobaldo's helmet, Camilla designed a combination of a hybrid sea monster or mythological sea creature, such as a dolphin. In antiquity, this giant sea animal was called the King of the Fishes and was associated with the mystery of the oceans (Cooper, 1992, pp. 78-80). In antiquity, the dolphin was an attribute of Poseidon (Neptune), God of the Sea (Avery, 2009, pp. 68-75). In heraldry, the dolphin is usually represented by a whole body and large ears, bearded, caudated, crested, and crowned. In addition, the dolphin's great intelligence and protective nature symbolize freedom, fidelity in sea travels, strength in battles and, ultimately, naval victory, as seen in heraldic devices and emblems (Camajni, 1940, pp. 224-226; Biedermann, 1994, p. 99). These emblematic attributes are incorporated into Camilla's depiction of the helmet. Moreover, of note, the renowned Milanese juror and emblemist Andrea Alciato (1492-1550) composed the emblem CXLI in his *Emblemata* with the



motto or title, "The Prince caring for the safety of his subjects" ("Princeps subditorum incolumitaten procurans") (Figure 9).<sup>9</sup>



Figure 9. Andrea Alciato, *Emblema CXLIII*, engraving in *Emblemata* (Padua: Petro Paulo Tozzi, 1621).

Photo courtesy: By permission of the University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections.

The image (*pictura*) depicts a cloudy sky in the background, with a vast ocean where naval ships navigate. There is an isthmus and islands with villages in the scene. In the foreground, on solid land, a winged dolphin wraps around an anchor to symbolize protection and security. The explanatory text (*subscriptio*) explains that the dolphin guides the ship's anchor to a safe resting place. In a stormy sea, the dolphin embraces the anchor, providing more security at the bottom of the ocean to protect the ship and its sailors. This picture and explanation are metaphorically suitable for political life and kingdoms, where the king uses the dolphin symbol to show his protection for his subjects.

Camilla's helmet comprises a dolphin's head with fins and some lanugo (hair) and a face with a lower jaw, rostrum, blowhole (nose), an open mouth, small ear holes, and large, wide eyes. The dolphin's coiled tail curls up at the top of the head. Its dorsal fin carries another small dolphin gliding on top with a crested body. The bond between the two dolphins suggests Guidobaldo's quest for political union in the Duchy. The white bird feathers adorning the helmet are likely from the Caladrius bird, a typical bird in Italy. According to Roman mythology,

<sup>9</sup> Andrea Alciato, *Emblema CXLIII*, engraving in *Emblemata* (Padua: Petro Paulo Tozzi, 1621). See Andrea Alciato at Glasgow <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A21a144> and reference to Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagia* (1536) (London: Bernard Alsop, 1621), proverb 1001. The image of the dolphin symbolizes speed, while the anchor signifies the ancient Roman saying *festina lente* (make haste slowly), cautioning against recklessness in battle and judgment. In the Renaissance, Aldus Manutius appropriated the emblem for the insignia of the Venetian press.

this snow-white bird was only found in the homes of kings, making it a royal bird (White, 1984, p. 115). The bird's symbolism, with its white plumage, signifies peace and nobility, further connecting to Guidobaldo's reign and persona. Hence, the helmet combines dolphins and white plumage in its design, anchored by the harmony and peace of Guidobaldo's leadership.

### The Armor

The other outstanding military object next to Guidobaldo's figure is his armor, which is made of metallic silver and gold highlighted designs. The armor comprises two parts: the body of the chest armature and two batons inside the opening of the collar area. The baton, rod, or staff symbolizes authority, dignity, and supreme power. Placing it inside the armor recalls the derivation of the name baton from the Latin *bastum*, meaning support and raise. The baton is raised to command attention and indicates the status of the person using it. The indication of support provides guardianship or defense, as it can also be used as a military weapon. At the same time, in ceremonial events, the ruler carries the rod or mace as an ornamental device of power.

In Camilla's armor, there are two rods. One is a plain wooden cylinder, and the other is a metal rod adorned with blue and golden spiral coils, serving as a ceremonial mace. The wooden rod symbolizes Guidobaldo's role as a *condottiere*, while the blue metal mace represents his position as the commander of Venice's ecclesiastical troops (Fontebuoni, 1981, p. 16).



Figure 10. Filippo Negroli, *Armor of Guidobaldo della Rovere, Duke of Urbino*, c. 1532–1535, steel and embossed gilt. National Museum of Bargello, Florence.



Figure 1a. Camilla Guerrieri, *Cuirass, det. Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, oil on copper canvas, (14 x 10.3 cm). Collection of Altomani & Sons, Pesaro. Photo credit: Altomani & Sons, Pesaro.

The heroic armor rests on a pedestal in front of the theatrical curtain. This type of armor is referred to as “Guarnitura della Fama” (“Ornament of Fame”) (Jäger, 2018, pp. 89-118; Phyr, Godoy, & Leydi, 1999, pp. 136-146; Scalini, 1987), pp. 10-12, 19-22) and is based on an original design by Negroli’s workshop; an example can be seen at the National Museum of Bargello in Florence (Figure 10). This steel breastplate, partially gilded, is adorned with feathers or bird wing scales with magical properties. It also features wide-open eyes looking in different directions, symbolizing vigilance (Apollod. II 1, 2 and Ovid, *Meta* I, 264). Perhaps the breastplate is not of batwings—perhaps the imagery is inspired by the myth of Argus Panoptes, a creature with one hundred eyes and known for his watchfulness. After his death, Hera (Juno), the Goddess of Heaven, honored his loyal guardianship by placing his eyes in the peacock’s feathers as jewels of her sacred bird (Ovid, *Meta* 2.531). The reference to the eyes on the armor signifies the alertness and caution that a *condottiere* or military soldier must have in battle and as a ruler in governing.

The Negroli collar’s decoration resembles capillary or rippling sea waves. A cartouche surrounded by oak foliage hangs from its center with the initials G.V. Dux. An inscription referencing the River Lethe, a mythic waterway of forgetfulness and reincarnation, is engraved: “In this itself, I will drink no oblivion from the river of Lethe” (“Nulla. Bibam. Laethes/Oblivia. Flumine. In. Ipso”) (Massari & Maria, 2006, pp. 433-434). This complex text alludes to the ancient belief in fame, oblivion, and rebirth (Reid, 1993, p. 483).

Camilla appropriated Negroli’s breastplate when designing the cuirass, which is now displayed at the Bargello. Although the Latin inscription is not visible, she skillfully enhanced the gilded embossing of the scaled feathers containing the magic open eyes, watchfully protecting the *condottiere*.

When considering the symbolism of the helmet and the cuirass, several classical references and allusions interplay, such as the connection of Mars, The God of War, and Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, Military Warfare, and Peace. Minerva/Athena’s miraculous birth, springing from the head of Jupiter (Zeus) as a force of Nature, in full armor, with a helmet, holding a spear, and chanting war songs, shook the sea and the earth (Bianchi, 1877, pp. 34-35). In ancient Roman sculpture, as well as in Renaissance drawings and paintings, representations of Minerva often depicted her wearing a plumed helmet, carrying a shield with the head of Medusa to ward off enemies, and holding an olive branch related to her sacred tree, as seen in the statue of Minerva of 150 BCE, in marble, a Roman copy of an Attic original from the fifth Century BCE, now in the Capitoline Museums in Rome (Figure 11), and the sixteenth-century drawing of Minerva from the *Libro del Sarto* (Figure 7b).



Figure 11. Minerva, Goddess of War and Wisdom, 150 BCE, marble. Roman copy of an Attic original from the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Capitoline Museums, Rome.



Figure 7b. Minerva, drawing. *The Libro del Sarto della Fondazione Querini Stampaglia di Venezia* (1520-1592). Photo courtesy: Prof. Damiano Acciarino.

Minerva's traditional attributes of plumed helmets and a cuirass, along with the evergreen plant, are metaphorically incorporated in Camilla's portrait of Guidobaldo, with its plumed dolphin's helmet, the cuirass with embossed eyes of Argus, and the vibrant green cloth of honor recalling the oak branches of della Rovere's insignia. In addition, Guidobaldo's fanciful military helmet and cuirass recall ancient Roman sculptures of the god Mars, such as the colossal statue of Mars in full regalia, attired in full armor, wearing a fanciful military helmet, carrying a baton. This second-century CE marble sculpture was once in the Forum of Nerva (Figure 12). And the marble head with a plumed helmet of Mars Ultor (The Avenger) of the second century CE was part of a complete statue from the Temple of Mars Ultor located in the Forum of Augustus in Rome (Bianchi, 1877, p. 53).





Figure 12. Mars, God of War, second century CE, marble, from the Forum of Nerva, Rome.

Thus, in Camilla's painting, the plumed helmet and armor are displayed on a pedestal covered with a cloth of honor, resembling heroic trophies like the honorific chain with the golden fleece. These military items surround the figure of Guidobaldo, who is dressed in noble clothes and carrying a sword and gloves. This suggests a comparison between his role as the leader of a military army and a duchy. In a metaphorical sense, he is immortalized as an ancient Roman hero.

### Coda

The attribution and dating of Camilla's portraits of Guidobaldo II della Rovere are beyond the scope of this essay. However, some observations are made for further consideration. The portrait of Altomani's *Guidobaldo II Della Rovere* should be dated to around 1658. Given the dating of the portrait's frame, it seems certain that Camilla copied and painted many portraits of the Della Rovere family, especially of Guidobaldo II della Rovere,

as indicated by the documents, and her active artistic career developed in the middle of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, given the Altomani portrait's artistic and iconographic similarities with the Metropolitan portrait, the date of this painting should also be reconsidered.

Camilla's other versions of *Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, like the one at the Museo Civico in Pesaro, need cleaning and restoration.<sup>10</sup> They are similar but simplified in composition. They feature a plain background and depict the cuirass and helmet beside the figure. The chain with the golden fleece is notably prominent (Figure 4) (Giardini, 2008, pp. 20-27). In contrast, the version at the Municipality in Senigallia is devoid of devices (Figure 3) (Giardini, 2008, pp. 20-27). Camilla's Altomani version resembles the portrait of the duke attributed to Taddeo Zuccaro or a Marchese painter in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Bologna; perhaps a reconsideration of attribution to Camilla might be considered (compare Figures 13 and 1a) (Verstegen, 2021b, pp. 43-54; Massari & Maria, 2006, pp. 433-34).



Figure 13. Painter from the Marche, attr. (Camilla Guerrieri?), *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, middle of XVII, oil on canvas, 114 x. 86 cm. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. Photo Courtesy: Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, Fondazione Zeri, Bologna.



Figure 1a. Camilla Guerrieri, *Portrait of Guidobaldo II della Rovere*, oil on copper canvas, 14 x 10.3 cm. Collection of Altomani & Sons, Pesaro. Photo credit: Altomani & Sons, Pesaro.

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<sup>10</sup> See catalogue entry <https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/1100206096>.

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