

Document name: Letter purported to have been written by Raphael to Baldassare Castiglione  
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*Dolce, L.*

Dolce, L. (1554) *Lettere di diversi eccellentiss. huomini, raccolte da diversi libri: tra le quali se ne leggono molte, non piu stampate*, Venice, Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, pp. 226–8, translation by K. Christian.

# Letter purported to have been written by Raphael to Baldassare Castiglione, published by Ludovico Dolce in 1554, composed c.1522 (?)

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[The ‘Galatea’ referenced here is the figure of a nymph painted by Raphael in the villa of Agostino Chigi, see Figure 3.2 in Block 1, Section 3.]

Signor Conte. I have made various designs for your subject you invented, and everyone likes them, if they are not flattering me, but they fail to satisfy my judgement, because I fear they will not satisfy yours. I am sending them to you. Choose one, if you find any of them worthy. His Holiness [the pope] with the honours he has given me has put a great weight on my shoulders. This is the charge of building St. Peter’s. I hope I will not collapse underneath it, and even more so since the model I have made pleases His Holiness and is praised by many ingenious minds. But I will raise myself up to higher thoughts. I wish to find the beautiful forms of ancient ruins; I know, my flight will be that of Icarus. Vitruvius<sup>1</sup> offers a great light, but not all that I need. With regard to the Galatea, I should consider myself a great master if it were only half of what you write in your letter to me. But in your words I recognize the love you have for me and I say that to paint a beautiful woman I need to see many beautiful women, on this condition: that you are here with me to judge the best. Yet lacking both in good judges, and in beautiful women, I avail myself of a certain Idea that comes to my mind. I don’t know if this has any artistic excellence to it, yet certainly I toil to acquire it. I remain at your command. From Rome.

<sup>1</sup> The Roman architect whose *De Architectura*, ‘The Ten Books on Architecture’ (c.15 BCE), is the only surviving example of the many treatises on art written by ancient artists. It not only offered an essential practical model for Early Modern artists and architects, but also inspired them to write treatises themselves as a way of elevating their the social and intellectual status.