

# Ways of Seeing: Carracci

*by* Bill Yarrow

I have become interested in Carracci—  
Ludovico Carracci, Bolognese  
contemporary of Shakespeare  
early Baroque artist, cousin  
of Agostino and Annibale

whose 1612 painting  
*Body of Saint Sebastian*  
*Thrown into the Cloaca Maxima*  
is a masterpiece  
of the frozen moment

Sebastian is limp in a sheet supported by  
muscular soldiers. His hands hang down,  
his eyes are shut. Is he asleep? More likely  
unconscious. After all, he is about to be  
thrown into the great sewer of Rome

Unless one rotates the image:  
then he becomes beautifully  
vertical, his dreaming body  
like a sleeping bird floating  
in warm, soft air

Then the closed fists and flexed  
forearms of the executioners  
are seen impotently attempting  
to hold him down but nothing  
human can prevent his rise

