NEW RESEARCH ON ART AND ITS HISTORY

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Art in Renaissance Italy

Painters and patrons in Siena | An architect's house in Florence | The fate of Tintoretto's studio
The slavery exhibition in Amsterdam | Dubuffet in London | The Pinault Collection, Paris

3. *Susannah and the elders*, by Bernardino Luini. c.1520. Oil on panel, 46 by 38.5 cm. (Collezione Borromeo, Isola Bella).

non-Florentine artist, Bernardino enjoyed considerable fame in and around Milan, where major works by him can still be seen at S. Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore, S. Giorgio al Palazzo and elsewhere. Interestingly, as duly recorded by Cristina Quattrini, the author of the book under review, in nineteenth-century England Bernardino's art experienced a revival, promoted in particular by John Ruskin, who famously said of him that he was 'ten times greater than Leonardo' (p.15).

It therefore comes as no surprise that the first monograph on Luini was published in London in 1899; written by the then prominent art historian George Charles Williamson, its appraisal of the artist was enthusiastic. But it was not until 1956 that the first large-scale catalogue of Luini's work was published in Italian by Angela Ottino Della Chiesa, who, like Quattrini, worked for the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Soprintendenza of Milan. With its ample holdings of works by Bernardino, the Brera is an obvious starting point for a study of the artist.

Ottino Della Chiesa's milestone publication paved the way for important specialised studies by such scholars as Luca Beltrami, Vittorio Pini, Grazioso Sironi and Maria Teresa Binaghi Olivari.[1] The monographic exhibition at Palazzo Reale, Milan, in 2014, the accompanying catalogue and the associated publication of relevant documents extended the analysis to Bernardino's sons, the painters Giovanni Pietro and Aurelio, and made available much new material.[2] Whereas most of these contributions focused primarily on the challenging reconstruction of Bernardino's life and œuvre, including drawings as well as paintings, further works on paper have been studied by scholars of the so-called *Leonardeschi*, such as Giulio Bora.[3] As noted by Quattrini in her introductory chapter, the Palazzo Reale show coincided with a critical phase of her project and prompted a profound reconsideration of her work. It is clear that her volume has had a long and intricate genesis, and Quattrini should be commended for her intellectual breadth and her resilience, two essential qualities required by such a titanic endeavour as the production of the catalogue raisonné of a prolific artist.

The book is divided into two sections: a succinct and informative essay, comprising five chapters, and a full catalogue. The essay opens with a balanced and clear account of Bernardino's *fortuna critica*. The following four chapters follow his life and work from his possible apprenticeship under Giovanni Stefano and Giovanni Bernardino Scotti with a particular focus on his sojourn in the Veneto and travels through Brescia shortly before 1508. A rich artistic panorama of Renaissance Milan, the context of Bernardino's work, is enlivened with references to the work of Cesare Cesariano, Agostino Busti, called il Bambaia, Bernardo Zenale and Bramantino, among others. Bernardino's trip to Rome, which some scholars have disputed, is placed between 1518 and 1520, after which the influence of Raphael eclipses that of local artists such as Zenale. *Susannah and the elders* (Fig.3), for example, harmoniously merges influences from Leonardo and Raphael in the style and type of the female figure. Attention then moves to the major commissions of 1519–25, and to Bernardino's final years.

In discussing patronage, Quattrini debunks the idea that Bernardino was mainly the painter of the French political elite, showing that he also was chosen by eminent Sforza patrons. For his important frescos in the sanctuary of S. Maria dei Miracoli, Saronno, for example, she hypothesises that the commission came from a 'Sforza man', Giovanni Antonio Biglia. For other projects, such as S. Maurizio, the 'temple' of Luini's art, questions of patronage are purposely left open to debate.

The catalogue encompasses 172 paintings and forty-two drawings, all illustrated in black and white, and includes a brief section on works that are dubious or lost. The works are arranged in stylistic groups, which are discussed chronologically, based on secure dates from Luini's life and career; attribution, condition, literature and provenance are discussed critically within the bodies of the substantial entries. Documents on Bernardino's life and work dated between 1482 and 1534 are transcribed. As implied by the title, the catalogue takes a holistic approach to Bernardino's œuvre. Quattrini also takes a few soundings in the perilous waters of Bernardino's extensive influence, offering a sample of this vast and complex area by discussing, for example, the *Holy Family with the young St John the Baptist* (c.1530; Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan; cat. no.161). She wisely steers clear of speculation about the work of Luini's sons, who operated in a cultural climate that was different from that of their father. Quattrini opens the question of Bernardino's workshop, suggesting that it was populated by a number of artists who produced works in his manner, and in which it is difficult to distinguish autonomous personalities; this pattern, incidentally, characterises his sons' *bottega* too.

This monograph, which was much needed for the development of Luini studies, offers an in-depth, mature, well-researched and deeply pondered analysis of his life and work. A *magnum opus*, it will be the foundation of all future work on this central figure of the Milanese Renaissance.

1 See, for example, L. Beltrami, ed: *Luini 1512–1532: Materiale di studio*, Milan 1911; V. Pini and G. Sironi: *Bernardino Luini: Nuovi documenti* per la sua biografia, Saronno 1993; and M.T. Binaghi Olivari: *Bernardino Luini*, Milan 2007.
2 Reviewed by Charles Robertson in this Magazine, 156 (2014), pp.626–27; G. Agosti and J. Stoppa, eds: exh. cat. *Bernardino Luini e i suoi figli*, Milan (Palazzo Reale) 2014;
3 See G. Bora: 'I leonardeschi e il ruolo del disegno', in G. Bora, L. Cogliati Arano, M.T. Fiorio and P.C. Marani, eds: exh. cat. *Disegni e dipinti leonardeschi dalle collezioni Milanesi*, Milan (Palazzo Reale) 1987–88.

La Sala Grande di Palazzo Vecchio e la Battaglia di Anghiari di Leonardo da Vinci: Dalla configurazione architettonica all'apparato decorativo (Biblioteca Leonardiana. Studi e Documenti, 8)

Edited by Roberta Barsanti, Gianluca Belli, Emanuela Ferretti and Cecilia Frosinini. 610 pp. incl. 168 col. ills. (Olschki, Florence, 2019), €60. ISBN 978-88-222-6670-5.

by **FRANÇOIS QUIVIGER**

Two of the most influential works of art of the sixteenth century existed only as projects: the *Battle of Anghiari* by Leonardo and

the *Battle of Cascina* by Michelangelo, frescos commissioned in 1504 for the Hall of the Great Council Sala Grande in Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. Both artists produced cartoons, but Michelangelo never began painting as he left for Rome to work for Julius II. Having begun painting a section of his fresco, Leonardo abandoned it after some disastrous experiments with media and eventually left Florence for Milan to serve the French government. In the 1560s Giorgio Vasari and his assistants redecorated the room, covering Leonardo's abandoned work with frescos glorifying the Medici regime. By then, prints and drawings of Michelangelo's cartoon had become one of the most influential repertoires of nude male figures of the time. Leonardo's work had a more limited impact, as only one fragment of the composition – the so-called *Fight for the standard* – survived in copies (Fig.4).

Scholars have since hypothesised that Leonardo's work might survive under Vasari's frescos. The 'Leonardo project' (1975–2013), run by the engineer Maurizio Seracini and encouraged by the late Carlo Pedretti, caused alarm by advocating the removal of Vasari's less than outstanding paintings to uncover the unfinished *Fight for the standard*. The present volume offers a scholarly contribution to this controversy, which has often been skewed by the image of Leonardo in popular culture, invigorated since 2003 by the planetary success of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. The book under review is divided into two parts. The first contains the proceedings of the five sessions of a conference organised by the editors, held in Florence in December 2016. All the papers, with one exception, are by Italian scholars and all are published in Italian with English abstracts – an approach that, unlike the footnotes and bibliography, does not reflect the international character of Leonardo scholarship. The second part, distinctly printed on off-white acid-free archive grade paper, consists of a detailed chronology and bibliography together with a 128-page collection of 429 transcriptions of documents related to the construction and decoration of the Sala Grande.

The first two sections of the proceedings focus on the historiography, archaeology, origins, construction, modifications and decoration of Palazzo Vecchio, from the Roman amphitheatre on which it was built to the exquisite *spalliere* and elaborate wooden ceiling that once framed the abandoned fresco. The third section examines the political contexts of the iconographic programme of the Hall of the Great Council. It consists of two papers that focus on Leonardo and the patronage of Piero Soderini, chancellor of the short-lived Florentine Republic, who commissioned the frescos, and three on Vasari and Cosimo I. The fourth section discusses the *fortuna critica* of the *Fight for the standard* through its various surviving copies.

4. *Fight for the standard*, after Leonardo da Vinci. 16th century. Oil on panel, 85.7 by 115.6 cm. (Gallerie degli Uffizi; Florence).

The fifth section, devoted to technical conservation reports, takes the reader to the modern world, where from 1975 the 'Leonardo project' endeavoured to discover Leonardo's lost fresco. As well as considerable media attention, the project received generous funding from American institutions – among others, the Armand Hammer Foundation, the Kress Foundation, the Smithsonian and the National Geographic – as well as enthusiastic backing from public figures such as Matteo Renzi, then mayor of Florence, and Dan Brown. Seracini intended to campaign for the removal of Vasari's fresco to uncover Leonardo's work once its exact location had been discovered, a task for which he adapted the most advanced available technologies, from intrawall penetrating radar to digital tools used for research into cancer. He discovered that one of Vasari's frescos had been painted on a wall built in front of another wall. He concluded that out of respect for Leonardo, Vasari had this second wall built to preserve the *Fight for the standard* rather than paint over it. Seracini obtained permission to drill small holes through Vasari's fresco in the hope of reaching the wall allegedly decorated by Leonardo. He was allowed to take only six samples, one of which proved potentially interesting as it contained possible traces of manganese and iron, both present in pigments Leonardo normally used. Since the samples had been examined by a laboratory sponsored by the project, a separate independent examination of them was requested by the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (the Florentine official institute for conservation) but the sample of most interest mysteriously disappeared or was accidentally destroyed, and in 2012 the Italian government cancelled authorisations for any further sample collection. The final contributions to this volume tend towards agreeing that the material evidence Seracini collected is inconclusive and they suggest that some of his hypotheses are based on incorrect grounds.

Since the volume is primarily about the Hall of the Great Council from the time of Leonardo to that of Vasari, other core aspects of the *Battle of Anghiari*, such as Leonardo's knowledge of war, horse anatomy and the culture of festivals (the protagonists of the *Fight for the standard* wear fancy tournament outfits) and his contributions to these subjects are hardly touched upon. Instead, by bringing together the joint efforts of more than thirty Italian scholars with a comprehensive anthology of documents, the

editors have aimed at making accessible all the necessary information on which further research to locate and identify Leonardo's unfinished battle can be based. The main conclusion of the volume, however, is that the mystery remains.

Un misto di grano e di pula: Scritti su Caravaggio e l'ambiente caravaggesco
By Gianni Papi. 272 pp. incl. 228 col. + 41 b. & w. ills. (Editori Paparo, Rome and Naples, 2020), €60. ISBN 978-88-319-8339-6.

by **JOHN GASH**

The title of Gianni Papi's fourth volume of collected essays, 'A mixture of wheat and chaff' – a quotation from Karel van Mander's life of Caravaggio in his *Het Schilderboek* (1604) – is something of a hostage to fortune. Whereas Van Mander was drawing a distinction between the excellence of Caravaggio's art and the waywardness of his life, with Papi readers are left to make up their own minds about the nature and location of the 'chaff'. However, whatever one's views on the many arguments about attribution, dating and patronage that punctuate these pages, and this reviewer diverges in several instances, there can be no doubt that Papi remains the leading current authority on Caravaggism, whose unrivalled familiarity with the art market, photographic archives and the conference circuit enables him to furnish knowledge and stimulate debate about familiar and unfamiliar pictures. As well as being a rich reservoir of information, this visually well-produced book bristles with challenging assertions. Papi is also keen, in a scientific spirit, to review longstanding issues of attribution, occasionally revising his previous positions, although also sometimes clinging to them excessively. It might be added that his discussions about attribution would be abetted were he to supply more information about the recent provenance of these pictures and give measurements for more of them than he does.

There are some notable successes. The chapter on Hendrick ter Brugghen's Italian sojourn (c.1607–14) plausibly links the large *Denial of St Peter* (Spier Collection, London) with a picture owned by Vincenzo Giustiniani; his attribution to the young artist of the recently surfaced *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Spier Collection) is equally compelling. He makes a good case too for attributing to Ter Brugghen an attractive *St John the Evangelist* (Sabauda Gallery, Turin) together with a half-length *Penitent St Peter* (private collection). Less convincing is a praying *St Stephen* (Koelliker Collection). Several other essays in the compilation also relate to Netherlandish artists working in Italy under Caravaggio's spell. One of them was David de Haen, Dirck van Baburen's collaborator at S. Pietro in Montorio, Rome, whom Giulio Mancini identified as one of the rising stars of the second generation of Caravaggists before his premature death in Palazzo Giustiniani in 1622. To De Haen Papi attributes a highly expressive yet truncated *Calling of St Matthew*,[1] with Christ and St Peter excised, which he acutely identifies as a cut-down version of a larger picture known through a black-and-white photograph in the Fondazione Zeri, Bologna. The original scale of the picture, which must date from c.1618–22, and its quality suggest a major commission, for either a church or one of the two leading collectors with whom De Haen was associated, Pietro Cussida or Vincenzo Giustiniani.

Another success is an incisive disquisition on Paulus Bor, the aristocratic painter from Amersfoort, who spent the early 1620s in Rome and whose hunched *St Jerome reading* (private collection), identified by Papi, is an altogether personal take on Caravaggism by this wealthy artist who never needed to rely on patronage. It may possibly have been painted in Italy or soon afterwards, as Papi suggests. By contrast, a beautifully finished *Theorbo player* in Dutch Arcadian vein (Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid), which Papi convincingly reattributes to Bor (from Jan Gerritsz van Bronckhorst), probably dates from later, even though Bor's chronology is impossible to pin down because of an absence of documentation and a consistency of style.

Papi's identification from his own '*fototeca*' of two impressive paintings, *Esther before Ahasuerus* and the *Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* as works by that chameleon of styles Angelo Caroselli (rather than Pietro Paolini) is also convincing and important, although one of the illustrations is poor. It enhances Caroselli's reputation at his best and displays the impact on him of both Caravaggio and Ribera, combined with certain *retardataire* qualities of technique, decoration and colouring. However, here as elsewhere, Papi gives no indication of the pictures' recent provenance or present location.

Some of Papi's other attributional forays are more questionable. A *King David playing the harp* (private collection), which Papi sees as an earlier, Italian-period trial run by Gerrit van Honthorst for the superior Dutch-period work in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, has all the appearance of a later studio variant, with several weak passages. A *Praying Mary Magdalene* (Graf von Schönborn Collection), which Papi argues is an early work of the leading French Caravaggist Valentin de

5. *The judgment of Midas*, here attributed to David de Haen. c.1620–21. Oil on canvas, 97 by 132 cm. (National Museum, Lublin).