

HERMANN VOSS

BAROQUE PAINTING IN ROME I

Caravaggio, Carracci, Domenichino and their Followers 1585-1620

Translated and Revised by THOMAS PELZEL

ISBN 1-55660-187-5

Revised, first English language edition. 152 Plates.

Published by ALAN WOFSY FINE ARTS, San Francisco, CA

At the end of the Cinquecento a temporary stagnation of Roman art - analogous, incidentally, to the situation in Florence a century earlier - is recognizable. It consists of an exaggeration and externalization of the new expressive means, which one tends to characterize as Mannerism. The architects and sculptors, but especially the painters, take pleasure in clamorous effects, in vitality and action at any price, in which there is something shrill and dissonant. Out of the natural, spontaneous conception and interpretation of a theme an artificial "invention" is developed; in a painting everything must take place as intensively and as passionately as possible, regardless of the nature of the subject matter. These aberrations entail in part an exaggeration of the tendency toward animation, and in part the misuse of the media. In central Italy the training of specifically painterly abilities remained far behind Venice and the rest of northern Italy, because the predominating influence of the Tuscans and the Umbrians favored a one-sided orientation toward draftsmanship and sculptural effects. Therefore, the vitalization of painting could only come about through a merging with the painterly-coloristic principle of Venetian and north Italian painting in general. This was achieved through a significant antithesis, namely in the consistently naturalistic chiaroscuro style of Caravaggio. This great Lombard painter had in a certain sense brought to completion the ideas of the earlier Cinquecento painters in that he actually carried out the principle of painterly pictorial unity that had been adopted by Raphael and Correggio. Due, however, to the entirely personal and startling character of his innovation he was more of a revolutionary than a reformer; this explains the nature of his influence. Not only the Italians were drawn into his wake, but also the northerners, from the Netherlandish and Spanish painters of the 17th century onwards, until the French luminescent painters of more recent times. And yet, for all the sensational excitement engendered by Caravaggio's first paintings around 1590, the Romans never accepted him because, in their opinion, he lacked that mark of creative greatness that was desired above all else in the south: an overall architectonic-monumental manner. Thus, after Caravaggio's initial astonishing successes, his rival, Annibale Carracci, who had moved to Rome from Bologna, soon began to gain ground. Carracci, who had been called to Rome as the heir of the painterly talents of Titian and Correggio, soon proved himself to be the adept master of the decorative-architectonic ideal of the Roman school. Through him and his followers, the union of the coloristic-painterly tradition of northern Italy with the Roman school, where the approach was based upon composition and draftsmanship, was completed.

Annibale Carracci saw his legitimate successor in Domenichino, rather than in Guido Rem, who was far more highly regarded by his contemporaries. When observed from the perspective of historical development, Domenichino's importance can hardly be overstated, since he took over what had been Annibale's most valued artistic heritage, large-scale decorative fresco paintings, which - when judged from a

certain point of view - he developed to its fullest perfection. While he did not equal Annibale in his originality or the depth of his invention, it was Domenichino who first created the style of grand narrative mural painting which became the authoritative standard not only for the monumental creations of the Italian masters of the Baroque, but also for Nicolas Poussin and the antiquity-oriented school of history painting. In his major works, Domenichino provided the bridge between the grand tradition of history painting rooted in Raphael and the northern classicism of the 18th century.

Dust-jacket illustration: Annibale Carracci:

The Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne

Oil on panel

Rome, Palazzo Farnese

HERMANN VOSS
PAINTING OF THE LATE RENAISSANCE IN ROME AND FLORENCE II
The Diffusion and Transformation of Mannerism, 1570-1600
Translated and Revised by SUSANNE PELZEL

ISBN 1-55660-259-6

Revised, first English language edition. 142 Illustrations.
Published by ALAN WOFSEY FINE ART, San Francisco, CA.

Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) had a significant impact in Florence and throughout Tuscany. A large number of younger artists assisted him in his work in the Palazzo Vecchio as well as in other commissions offered by the new Medici state under Cosimo 1. An entire generation grew up in the spirit of his art. Seen as a whole, it therefore presents a remarkably consistent, even monotonous impression. Naldini, Poppi, Zucchi, and Stradanus were the best known artists of these decades, and at the same time those who stood closest to their master. A larger circle of followers gathered around them, including some, like Alessandro Allori, who carried on the Michelangelesque tradition after Bronzino and others, like Macchietti, who strove towards a purer, more genuinely independent style.

In Rome the Mannerist style introduced by Salviati and Vasari was continued independently by Taddeo and Federico Zuccari. Their appearance marks the really decisive step in the development of the late Renaissance in Rome, since their achievements, in contrast to those of Salviati and Vasari, were founded almost entirely upon Roman premises.

Few painters emerged as recognizably strong individuals from this colorful and confused tableau of the last phase of the Cinquecento in Rome. By far the most important was Federico Barocci of Urbino, a younger countryman and student colleague of Zuccari, who, after an initially successful participation in Roman fresco projects, soon returned to his native city. With his meticulously prepared and energetically painted altarpieces he became the admired model of an entire group of artists, mostly from the Marches, but also including such painters as Vinni and Salimbeni from southern Tuscany. Another such artist, albeit of more limited talent, was Girolamo Muziano of Brescia, in whom the monumental tradition of Sebastiano del Piombo found a late echo. A similar figure in terms of his coloristic and compositional poise was Cristoforo Roncalli, born in southern Tuscany of north Italian descent. Giuseppe Cesari of Arpino should also be included among these stronger personalities; his particular distinction was his southern Italian polish and linear elegance, combined with a somewhat empty pathos, and a pleasant though rather soft and oversweet coloration. Like Roncalli he remained active well into the seventeenth century.

In Florence, even while Mannerism in the style of Vasari remained in full bloom, a significant reaction began with the lucidly organized and thematically well defined altarpieces of Santi di Tito. Tito's art aimed at naturalism and clarity of representation as well as spatial and compositional comprehensibility; this constituted in many respects a revitalization of older Florentine practices. Ciampelli, Boscoli, and Pagani (who awakened great hopes but who died young) continued these efforts, while Bernardino Poccetti revived the interrupted Quattrocento tradition of his native city in the field of history murals.

A final phase of Florentine painting in the sixteenth century, one that carried over into the Seicento, is embodied by Passignano. He is the earliest artist whose work was fruitfully influenced by Venetian art. Along with Passignano, the Verona-born Jacopo Ligozzi successfully disseminated the Venetian style of painting in Florence. Although his goals (like those of Passignano) frequently relate to those of the following century, he too must be considered essentially a Cinquecento artist, given his fiindamental artistic convictions and practice.

Dust-jacket illustration: Taddeo Zuccari:

Emperor Charles V and Alexander Farnese at Worms

Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola, Italy