

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Craftsman Revealed: Adriaen de Vries, Sculptor in Bronze* by Jane Bassett

Review by: C. D. Dickerson III

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the preparatory drawings in particular can be related to finished works.

Giancarlo Fiorenza, Pierre Daura Curator of European Art at the Georgia Museum of Art, provides a lively introduction that surveys drawing and printmaking during the period with specific references to the works in the exhibition.

The catalogue demonstrates both the tremendous variety of subject matter that interested artists and patrons during this period and how, over time, the themes of art were expanded to encompass new subjects. There are representations of the usual Madonnas, saints, allegories, and themes from mythology. By the mid-eighteenth century, the respect for the artist as an inventor led Giovanni Battista Piranesi to create a suite of etchings called *Carceri d'invenzione* and Giambattista Tiepolo to create suites of etchings entitled *Scherzi di fantasia* and *Capricci*. The exceptional work from Tiepolo's *Capricci* in the collection of the Georgia Museum of Art is *Death Giving Audience* (cat. 53), an unforgettable image of an encounter in a cemetery between a huddled group of humanity, a suspicious dog, and a seated skeleton who has apparently been interrupted while reading. The meaning is clear but the effect is haunting.

The fact that the catalogue is large-size means that many of the drawings and prints can be reproduced almost to scale; studying them in color in the catalogue is a reminder that these works on paper were originally held in the hand or mounted in albums, not framed and hung on the wall as in the exhibition. The result is an appropriate intimacy that heightens the connection between the reader and the artist at work, an important factor in building an appreciation for these works. Note, for example, how the apparently quick cross-hatching and flowing lines of Pier Antonio Novelli's *Bust of a Male Saint (?)* (cat. 36) capture the figure's movement and spontaneous expression, or how the red and white chalk models the figure in the study of a male nude model assigned, tentatively, to Benedetto Luti (cat. 31). The drawings that are squared for transfer transport us to the studio or to the site of the original fresco and the efforts of artist and workshop to create a larger work from the condensed idea represented in the drawing. Such works can help us establish links in the creative process that are not evident in the finished works.

The catalogue is published in memory of the late Georgia professor of art history Andrew Ladis (1949–2007), whose enthusiasm for studying original works of art such as those presented here was well known. One comes away from this broad survey with a renewed appreciation for the facility of Italian artists with chalk, pen, brush, burin, and etching needle. The catalogue makes an important contribution by presenting these works to the public and adding the unpublished drawings to the historical and artistic record. By documenting in detail the thoughtful scholarship of the two curators, it offers a model for how these delicate and impressive works can be studied, understood, and appreciated.

RON S. J. GROS

**The Craftsman Revealed: Adriaen de Vries, Sculptor in Bronze.** Jane Bassett. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008. xiv + 324 pp. \$60.00. ISBN 978-0-89236-919-5.

REVIEWED BY: C. D. Dickerson III, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

This useful and lavishly illustrated book represents the fruits of research undertaken in conjunction with the exhibition *Adriaen de Vries: Imperial Sculptor*, held in 1998 and 1999 at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Since the late 1980s, the Getty has proven itself a leader in the technical analysis of Renaissance bronze sculpture, using its considerable resources to gather technical data on select groups of bronzes. It was with this tradition in mind that the Getty resolved early in the planning of the De Vries exhibition to incorporate a significant com-

ponent of technical research. In the years leading up to the exhibition, Francesca Bewer (Straus Center for Conservation, Harvard University) examined thirty of the bronzes at their home institutions. When the exhibition arrived in Los Angeles, an additional group was analyzed. Eventually, twenty-five were selected to be included in this book. Priority was given to bronzes that had not been radiographed or that had not had their core samples or alloys analyzed and to bronzes that presented particular problems of attribution.

The study comprises two principal sections: a description of the methodologies used in the examinations, followed by individual entries on the twenty-five bronzes. The first part is especially valuable in the way it provides a clear and concise overview of the analytical techniques normally applied to bronze sculpture: X-ray radiography, X-ray fluorescence alloy analysis, core analysis, and thermoluminescence dating. After describing these techniques in layman's terms, the chapters in this section turn to the raw data gathered from the De Vries bronzes and suggest ways that the results might be interpreted. These discussions are complemented by an array of informative charts, and the authors do an excellent job of conveying to the reader (especially to nonspecialists) the crucial role played by statistical analysis in the evaluation of many of these results.

The twenty-five case studies at the core of the book are exemplary for their thoroughness and the numerous annotated photographs used to illustrate the conclusions reached in the text. The value of these photographs cannot be overstated. They enable the book to function as one of the few places in print where historians of sculpture can learn how to "read" an X-radiograph of a Renaissance bronze. They also serve to teach about surface facture—how to distinguish, for example, between textures applied in the wax and textures applied in the metal, which are engraved. At the end of each entry appears a convenient summary of the results, and it is here that the broader implications of each examination are discussed. For instance, in chapter 18, on the *Cain and Abel* from the University of Edinburgh, the summary tackles the difficult problem of how this bronze relates to the nearly identical version in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. The complicating factor is that De Vries was not in the habit of producing multiples, which leads to the suspicion that the later version is a copy by a different artist. Not so, suggests the technical evidence, which indicates that both bronzes conform to De Vries's technique—even down to details such as the armatures and the compositions of the alloys and the cores. Still, as the author points out, it seems unlikely that the later version was cast from the same molds used for the earlier one, as there is a discrepancy in measurements between the two bronzes. The later one is slightly smaller. Bassett suggests that a second set of molds must have been made from the earlier version—what is termed an aftercast. In her eyes, however, there is a remaining problem; the cast-in signature on the base of the Edinburgh bronze does not reappear on the Stockholm bronze, which should be the case if the later bronze were a perfect aftercast. To this reviewer, the discrepancies are easily enough explained. The Stockholm bronze is in fact an aftercast, and the original inscription was simply sanded out of the new molds to provide a clean surface for the updated one, which now reads 1622.

Among the many fascinating things to emerge from this study is that De Vries's bronzes show an unusual consistency in their alloy compositions. Comparison is made to the bronzes of Giambologna and Hubert Gherard, and it becomes even more curious that De Vries should be so careful in his preference for pure alloys. The next step will be to investigate founding practices in Prague itself and to situate De Vries in this context. Technical research on northern European bronzes lags well behind that on Italian bronzes, but this book provides an important corrective. The data collected in it will only become increasingly useful as more and more bronzes are analyzed and as the archives in Prague and elsewhere are more deeply mined for information about founders and the sculptors who

employed them. In this light, however, one wishes that the Getty had chosen a different medium for the book by which to disseminate its findings (especially considering the enormously high costs of producing a book of this size). On the internet, this book would have offered a library of data that could have been easily expanded every time the Getty had the chance to analyze a new bronze.

END NOTES

**The Art of Mantua: Power and Patronage in the Renaissance.** Barbara Furlotti and Giulio Rebecchini. Trans. A. Lawrence Jenkins. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008. 280 pp. \$84.95. ISBN 978-0-89236-840-2.

REVIEWED BY: Christine Meek, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

This handsome volume is published simultaneously in Italian, French, and English. The original text is by Guido Rebecchini, who wrote the chapters on fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Mantua, and Barbara Furlotti, who is responsible for the introductory chapter and the chapters on the period from the mid-sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. A. Lawrence Jenkins's translation is readable and elegant, though one could occasionally argue with particular renderings, such as the "earldom" of Mantua (7) and the age of illuminism (262).

The book is essentially about the Gonzaga *marchesi* of Mantua, dukes after 1530, as patrons, using art to glorify their dynasty and reflecting the artistic taste of their age. It proceeds in roughly chronological order, concentrating on buildings and works of art and the circumstances in which they were produced; the political and intellectual life of Mantua is considered only incidentally and insofar as it influenced artistic commissions. But the book is more than just a run-through of familiar material on Mantuan art. The authors provide a useful compendium of little-known works, such as the frescoes in Santa Maria del Gradaro and San Francesco, and they are admirably up-to-date, frequently making specific references to recent research, such as the rehabilitation of the role of Francesco II as an artistic patron in the thesis of Molly Bourne (PhD: Harvard, 1998; *Francesco II Gonzaga: The Soldier-Prince as Patron* [Rome: Bulzoni, 2008]). There are no notes, but some, though by no means all, references are taken up in the bibliography. The authors are also independent-minded and provide their own interpretation of Mantua's artistic history. The commissions produced under the patronage of Ludovico II are dealt with relatively briefly, despite the obvious importance of the work of Mantegna, and there is a decidedly disenchanted discussion of Isabella d'Este both as a patron and as a collector. In contrast, there is an extended and appreciative chapter on Federico and the role of Giulio Romano.

But for many readers the text will take second place to the magnificent illustrations. These are mainly from the art publishers Scala, though a few are from galleries and collections that now house works originally in Mantua. While some of the illustrations are of well-known works, such as the Camera degli Sposi or the Leonardo drawing of Isabella d'Este, now in the Louvre, others are much less familiar. It does not seem an extravagance that all the frescoes of signs of the zodiac by Giovanni Maria Falconetto in the Palazzo d'Arco are illustrated. There are superb photographs of the Sala di Psyche in the Palazzo Te or the even less well-known Sala di Troia in the Palazzo Ducale, including large parts of the ceiling frescoes. It is one of the ironies of art history that works of art can often be seen and appreciated much better as illustrations in a high-quality publication than on the site itself, and even those familiar with Mantua will find there is much to discover in the two-page spreads and close-ups of frescoes that is not visible from a greater distance. Only in the case of the Sala dei Giganti do photographs fail to convey the claustrophobic atmosphere of