

biography of Nana dei Valori). The proofreading is not perfect either, with a confusing use of arabic and Roman numerals. *Galiane in Rivolta* comes in two volumes: I was only sent the introductory volume, but not the one containing the treatises themselves. Problems with the publishers apart, I would thoroughly recommend the purchase of both texts for anyone working in the fields of women's history, cultural and social history, and humanism.

University of Melbourne

CATHERINE KOVEST KILLERBY

Stephen Campbell, *Cosmè Tura of Ferrara. Style, Politics and the Renaissance City*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. xii + 207 pp. \$45. ISBN 0-300-07219-8.

Joseph Manca, *Cosmè Tura. The Life and Art of a Painter in Estense Ferrara*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000. xviii + 268 pp. £75.00. ISBN 0-198-17424-1.

Monographs on fifteenth-century Ferrarese painters seem to be a bit like London buses. You wait an inordinate amount of time and then two come along together. It was more than a thirty-year wait between the publication of Mario Salmi's monograph on Ercole de' Roberti and the arrival of Joseph Manca's volume on the artist in 1992 and Monica Molteni's in 1995.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the publication of the two books reviewed here, the last major monographs on the fifteenth-century Ferrarese painter Cosmè Tura both appeared in the late 1950s – Mario Salmi's in 1957 and Eberhard Ruhmer's in 1958. One senses that, sometime within the next few years, we should see the arrival of a set of books on Francesco del Cossa and the tripartite cycle will have been completed for this generation.<sup>2</sup>

As one might expect, the state of scholarship on fifteenth-century Ferrarese painting has changed tremendously over the intervening period. Until relatively recently, writings on Ferrarese art were shaped by four major influences. The first is that very little art from this period has survived. What does exist is scattered in bits and pieces throughout the museums and galleries of the world. In his study of Ferrara, Werner Gundersheimer claimed that 'the Estensi probably owned more square meters of frescoed walls than any other family in history, and almost certainly more than any Italian city except Rome, Venice, and Florence'.<sup>3</sup> In Ferrara itself only the faintest traces of this wealth remain – the fragmentary frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia existing as one of the very few clues as to how rich and diverse this heritage must have once been before it was destroyed in the early seventeenth century, following the exhaustion of the Este dynasty in 1598. The second factor is that the local school of painting attracted the interest of a number of excellent historians and art historians, such as Girolamo Baruffaldi, Cesare and Luigi Napoleone Cittadella,

<sup>1</sup> Mario Salmi, *Ercole de' Roberti* (Milan, 1960); Joseph Manca, *The Art of Ercole de' Roberti* (Cambridge, 1992); Monica Molteni, *Ercole de' Roberti* (Milan, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> There was also a thirty-one-year wait between Felton Gibbons's book on Dosso and Battista Dosso (1968) and the recent catalogues connected to the Dosso exhibition, shown in Ferrara, New York, and Los Angeles (1999). See Felton Gibbons, *Dosso and Battista Dosso* (Princeton, NJ, 1968) and Peter Humphrey and Mauro Lauto, et al., *Dosso Dossi. Pittore di Corte a Ferrara nel Rinascimento* (Ferrara, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Werner Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton, NJ, 1973), 251.

and Adolfo Venturi, who scoured the archives over a period of two-and-a-half centuries and uncovered a wealth of detailed documents about the artists, their commissions and their lives. What Ferrara lacks in works of art, it certainly has in documents. The third major influence on Ferrarese art-historical scholarship was the massive personality of Roberto Longhi, whose influential work on Ferrarese painting not only shaped the field, but set both the assumptions and the tone for all subsequent studies of the school for the next fifty years. Many of the connoisseurs studying Ferrarese painting today are direct, second-generation inheritors of this tradition.

Finally, the fourth factor has been the fact that Ferrara's artists – for whatever reason – did not seem to follow art historians' ideas of how artists ought to behave. Owing to the peculiar way in which the discipline of art history had developed over the centuries, the lion's share of scholarly attention was focused on Florence. We know a great deal about how Florentine workshops operated, how drawings were used there, and how the artists worked together, influenced each other, and shared ideas. When art historians later tried to apply these models of behaviour to artists working elsewhere in Italy, there was a mismatch.<sup>4</sup> The Florentine model simply did not fit a number of the artists working outside the Tuscan milieu. As a result, art historians grouped these anomalous, 'non-Tuscan' artists together; and, since many of them had been affiliated with one or another of the Italian courts at some point in their careers, the convenient tag of 'court artist' was created. As a type, the court artist was seen as the antithesis of his solid, reliable, Florentine *bürgerlich* counterpart.<sup>5</sup> He was a maverick, an entrepreneur – or, often, an isolated genius with tendencies towards madness. Since his career was dependent on the whim of an inherently capricious courtly patron, he was, by necessity, a courtier first and artist second – often having to resort to espionage, intrigue, and skulduggery to secure a commission. The court artist painted in an old-fashioned, 'courtly' style which, by Tuscan standards, was deemed to be 'irrational, conservative and escapist' (Campbell, 3, 163, note 13). The court artist also tended to have an unhealthy close relationship with the decorative arts.

In the past twenty years, two of these four parameters have started to give way. The tragic lack of art and embarrassing richness of documentation remains, but our understanding of Renaissance Ferrara and its artists has developed almost beyond recognition. The careers of the artists who worked outside of Tuscany are much better understood and even the generic descriptor of 'courtly' is beginning to give way under the weight of increased study into the life and culture of the individual courts themselves.

To understand the work of Cosmè Tura, for example, it is important to recognize that, even though he was better paid than his contemporaries, he was not the court artist of the Estensi. He never held a position of favour equal to, say, that which Mantegna gained in Mantua. Nor does he seem ever to have gained the level of personal contact with individual members of the Este family that Ercole de' Roberti later enjoyed. Instead, it appears that there was a relatively large group of regularly salaried artists in Ferrara, each of whom were called '*deipintore del corte*', who were commissioned either individually or as part of a group to fulfil specific commissions.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, my review of the 1996 Pisanello exhibition in Paris and Verona in *Renaissance Studies*, 11/2 (1997), 141-7, esp. 146.

<sup>5</sup> The latest extrapolation of this tendency can be seen in Martin Warnke, *Hofkünstler. Zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Künstlers* (Cologne, 1985); English trans. by David McLintock, *The Court Artist. On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (Cambridge, 1993).

Membership of a group was not static like the master-apprentice structure of a Florentine or Venetian *bottega*: tasks were assigned in line with the skills required for the job, and those *deipintori* who had not been involved in a particular commission would then be called in as 'quality assessors', evaluating the work of their peers and ensuring its quality for the commissioning patron.

Once one understands the fluidity of function in the position of Ferrarese *deipintore del corte*, it becomes slightly easier to reconcile a number of apparent idiosyncrasies that have troubled art historians for decades. It illuminates some of the iconographic and stylistic incongruities within the series paintings associated with Leonello d'Este's *studiolo* at Belfiore, and many aspects of the painting of the frescoes in the *Salone dei Mesi*, such as the reuse of cartoons, the later repainting of all the portrait busts of Borso d'Este, and, most fundamentally, why Francesco del Cossa's plea for special treatment went unheard.<sup>6</sup> Irritating as this co-operative form of artistic production may be for those art historians who have been trained exclusively as connoisseurs, it is a tradition that continues in Ferrara for at least another 150 years. Recent work on the late sixteenth-century volumes of the *Munizioni e fabbriche* of the *Camera Ducale* has shown that salaried artists in Ferrara were expected to perform for the court as multi-skilled members of a team.<sup>7</sup> The concept of the specialized 'artist' may have existed, but, in practice, the local painters were still regarded as craftsmen.

In his book on Cosmè Tura, Joseph Manca has provided a lengthy and well-researched *catalogue raisonné* of accepted and disputed works, accompanied by sixty-three pages of documents. Manca has what is known in the trade as 'a good eye'. His attributions are well-argued and his observations on Tura's technique are sound. The main body of the monograph is preceded by four essays, which provide a useful summary of the critical reception of Tura's work from the fifteenth century to the present day, an exploration of the relationship between the artist and Estense Ferrara, an examination of the issue of Tura's distinctive style of painting within the context of contemporary, fifteenth-century painting, and an extended study of Tura's paintings in terms of their subject matter, secular and sacred.

Even the most sanguine of viewers has to admit that there is something distinctly odd about Tura's style of painting. Manca proposes that recent characterizations of Tura's work as 'nervous', 'demonic', 'feverish', or 'deformed' have been 'coloured with the anxieties, suspicions, and uneasy concerns of modern times' (13). Instead, he characterizes Tura as 'an *ex courant* artist, one who had taken part in the re-evaluation and alteration of the International Gothic style... [but has] retained to the end a few Gothic aspects, including high-colouring, profuse ornamentation, cursive lettering and the occasional sweet figural types' (22-3). Later, he adds that Tura art reflects the larger movements in north Italian art, '[the] vivid, highly plastic, brightly coloured, and inventive *all'antica* manner that replaced late Gothic style' (45). Manca describes Tura's painting as 'stylish, sophisticated, witty and emotionally restrained; rarely does any figure seem to strain to impress... [it is art] devised for one accustomed to the self-conscious and contrived social behaviour at court' (24). Yet Manca also sees Tura's style of painting as akin to Boiardo's poetic style, full of 'primitive energy', 'blunt, yet

<sup>6</sup> For more on the vexed question of artistic personality in the *Salone dei Mesi*, see K. Lippincott, 'Gli affreschi del Salone dei Mesi ed il problema dell'attribuzione' in R. Varese (ed.), *Atlante di Schifanoia*, Istituto di Studi Rinascimentali (Modena, 1989), 111-59, esp. 135.

<sup>7</sup> See *L'ingegno di Alfonso il Saggio e documenti sulla produzione artistica a Ferrara nel secondo Cinquecento*, ed. J. Benini and L. Spezzerfero (Bologna, 1987), reviewed by Lippincott in *Apollon*, N.S. cxxviii, no. 317 (1988), 70.

stylized', 'frantic and misaimed'. Both Tura and Boiardo 'avoided the rationality, lucidity, and efficiency that we associate with art and literature produced in commercial, bourgeois cultural centres' (28-9). Nevertheless, Tura is not a maverick because his work is not 'a charged commentary on some earlier style', even though his silver service for Eleanor d'Aragona can be described as 'classifying', '*all'antica*', and 'antiquizing' (22, 19).

It is certainly true that the paintings of Cosmè Tura are stylistically very complex, but it must remain open as to whether or not they represent the fact that 'Gothic and Renaissance modes coexisted in Estense Ferrara through the eighth decade of the century and beyond' (23). Tura's paintings record one of the many moments in the history of Italian art when numerous ideas and influences were coming together to form something new. For this very reason, one should be careful about the words employed to describe them.

Stephen Campbell's 'monograph' on Cosmè Tura approaches the subject from another direction. Indeed, as he suggests in his introduction, traditionally structured monographic studies of Tura may be doomed because they place priority on a set of issues which can never be fully resolved. On account of the holes that pepper what little remains of Ferrarese art, any study aiming to reconstruct a complete biography, a plausible chronology of works, a list of definitive attributions, or a series of reconstructions of dismantled polyptychs will be incomplete. To date, monographic studies of Tura's works have not only failed to present a clear picture of his career; they have failed to move us any closer to an understanding of why he painted the way he did.

It is clear that Tura was able to earn a decent living from a wide range of Ferrarese patrons for over thirty years. For a great deal of that time, he was better paid than his local rivals and he received numerous commissions from the court, the local aristocracy, and the clergy. So, rather than using the paintings themselves as the starting point, Campbell sets out to explore the surrounding milieu in which these works were created. What can one uncover about the pressing concerns and assumptions of the fifteenth-century Ferrarese that might shed additional light on the production of paintings during the period?

In considering the series of paintings associated with the decorative cycle of Muses originally painted for Leonello's *studiolo* at Belfiore, Campbell uncovers a trove of fascinating information about contemporary controversies over the suitability of the subject matter. At the turn of the sixth century, Boethius had characterized the Muses as '*sirenes*' and '*scenicas meretriculas*' ('sirens' and 'theatrical whores'), and for the next nine centuries this image of the Muses became a potent symbol in a heated controversy over the moral dangers inherent in any study of the pagan poets. In Ferrara in the 1450s, with a number of influential, itinerant preachers condemning all poetry as *strenarum cantu*, Leonello's decision to decorate his *studiolo* with images of the Muses was bold and controversial. Campbell's discussion of the history and implication of this decision reflects a subtle appreciation of the preoccupations of another age.

In his chapter Tura's religious paintings, Campbell focuses his attention on fifteenth-century attitudes towards human physiognomy. In particular, he explores ideas about religious asceticism prevalent during the period and questions the extent to which Tura's manipulation of the bodily form reflects these ideas. Again, drawing from little-known contemporary sources, Campbell creates a series of convincing arguments to support a new way of understanding what many would consider to be merely 'stylistic' elements in Tura's work. His chapter on the iconography of the

now-dismembered Roverella altarpiece and its relationship to the large Jewish community which had settled in Ferrara is similarly full of new materials and insights. Nearly all of his suggestions have some merit to them (save the very rare and isolated instances of iconographic chance-taking, such as the idea that the curled head-dress worn by the princess in Tura's *St George and the Princess* 'probably represents the Golden Horn, the area of water north of Constantinople': 142). Moreover, Campbell writes with such style and elegance that it makes the book a pleasure to read.

These are two very different books reflecting two very different views on the art produced in Ferrara during the second half of the fifteenth century. Beyond this, however, they record highly divergent schools of thought about the nature and purpose of art history itself.

Royal Observatory Greenwich, London

KRISTEN LIPPINCOTT

Genevieve Warwick, *The Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xiv + 290 pp. 58 b & w illus. £45. ISBN 0-521-65265-0.

Far less attention has been given to collecting drawings than paintings, but Padre Sebastiano Resta (1635–1714) – who played a formative role in the development of this field – has at least made occasional appearances in the literature on art, although unfortunately often as a maligned and even pilloried figure. Resta joined the Oratorians in 1665 and collected drawings in order to raise money for charity. He soon achieved a privileged position as the friend of many distinguished artists, art historians, and critics of his time, not to mention some of the leading collectors in Rome and elsewhere. But his writings were never published, surviving only as scattered fragments, and they have been often lazily dismissed as unreliable and eccentric. Genevieve Warwick's book is not just a rehabilitation of Resta (although this is an impressive enough outcome of her work) but also a study of the historiography of Italian art in the period after Vasari, and this makes *The Arts of Collecting* a work of wide-ranging interest and importance. Her subtitle suggests that the book is concerned with the market for drawings but it is as much, if not more, an anthropological history of collecting.

Few collectors of drawings have documented themselves more extensively or more elusively than Resta. Like most other collectors of the period he mounted his drawings in albums, but unlike them he annotated the pages heavily, often allowing his pen to venture on to the surface of the works themselves. These albums, in which word and image were meant to be seen together and as part of a sequence, have been dispersed. Warwick has made a thorough investigation of the surviving mounts, the drawings themselves, and those few albums that survive intact. She has also been tenacious in exploring public and private archives in Italy for Resta's surviving correspondence (which would surely be worth publishing more fully). She is generous in acknowledging the work of previous scholars, notably A. E. Popham and Carol Gibson Wood, without whose work her job would have been far more difficult. They concentrated on the arrival of a large part of Resta's collection in England and on one source, British Library Lansdowne MS 802 (a compilation put together by John, Lord Somers's librarian in the early eighteenth century), while Warwick has looked far more widely. In fairness, Resta's *postille* in several books that he owned have been

published by Italian scholars (most recently by Antonio Vannugli), and Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò has made remarkable discoveries of Resta's material, but no one has attempted such a comprehensive and ambitious study of Resta before now.

Warwick sets out to employ methods from sociology and anthropology in order to understand how Resta obtained his acquisitions and what use he made of them. For Warwick, Resta's collection was 'shaped by its cultural circumstances' (2), and she gives warm acknowledgement to scholars such as Thorstein Veblen and Domna Stanton when analysing Resta's concept of noble behaviour and gentlemanly study, which she hints helped to shape eighteenth-century ideas of the amateur. Near the start of her book, Warwick is at pains to demonstrate her own intellectual pedigree and her endnotes provide long lists of authorities in other disciplines who are at some remove from the main area of focus. This is reminiscent of Resta's own liking for artistic genealogies, and disconcertingly suggests that a scholar's work can take on the characteristics of its subject.

The anthropological strand in Warwick's approach is clear from her emphasis on material culture and modes of exchange. Here, Norbert Elias on the social function of manners, and, in particular, Marcel Mauss on gift-giving, have influenced a particularly fascinating and convincing analysis of how Resta both gave and received gifts of drawings, creating elaborate chains of social, intellectual, and monetary obligation that were intended to advance his charitable projects. As Warwick writes, 'An object changes hands under the guise of a disinterested gift, when in fact its intention, understood by both parties, is to procure a return' (56). For example, Resta offered a Barocci drawing to Clement XI Albani. The pope refused it, and, as a result, emerges as a man of good sense in avoiding a charade of elaborate generosity intended to disguise the fact that Resta needed to make a profit. Too often the study of collecting has been written in terms of the transport of artefacts from one place to another, often glamorizing the owners in the process, but Warwick has taken this to a much more illuminating level by revealing the social subtext to the acquisition of works of art.

Warwick's first chapter examines the network of collectors who sustained Resta's activities, and provides an enthralling account of how he saw his treasures fall into the hands of English art agents and go abroad because of the collapse of the Italian market. Between 1698 and 1702 Resta presented Bishop Giovanni Matteo Marchetti of Arezzo with nineteen albums containing approximately 2,500 drawings, but the bishop was never able to make the expected cash return and Resta was left with debts of both money and honour. A large part of this collection was obtained by the British envoy in Florence, Henry Newton, and an agent, John Talman, acting on behalf of Lord Somers. Warwick reveals both the European implications of this dispersal of the Italian patrimony, and Resta's nostalgia in the face of Italy's lost cultural leadership.

Warwick then moves on to study Resta as a connoisseur. In her opinion, Resta's conduct as a collector reflected the social values of his class (he was born into the cadet branch of a noble family in Milan) and the 'etiquette of conversation' (78), which is used to illuminate the literary style of his notes, often written as if addressed directly to the reader in response to a specific discussion. In terms of seventeenth-century historiography Resta is interesting: he read the published sources widely, visited archives, and had correspondents throughout Italy. His understanding of art was shaped by the theory and practice of his time: he understood pictorial style as something which could be taught and modified, shaped by visual traditions that were channelled through regional schools of painting, and adapted or combined through