

toons producing an altarpiece of outstanding quality. But the youthful Raphael should perhaps not, as tentatively suggested here, be associated with the adaptation of the Cambio cartoon for the Saint Michael. It was Perugino himself who adjusted his original figure-formula from the Cambio fresco for the subsequent panels for Vallombrosa and the Certosa at Pavia<sup>2</sup>. As his Windsor drawing proves, Perugino directly responded in each case to the paintings' specific patronage and destination, – aspects of a broader historical context which Hiller has at times insufficiently considered.

Hiller's text reads easily, although the first part could with advantage have been shortened. The 270 monochrome reproductions, mainly of panel-paintings and drawings, are generally well-integrated into the text. Particularly helpful is the rich technical documentation, difficult of access and partly unpublished. The student is given X-radiographs, photographs in raking light, infra-red and infrared-reflectograms. Three extremely informative schematic „trees“, for Raphael's Gavari „Crucifixion“ and Perugino's San Pietro and Decemviri complexes, succinctly illuminate the author's argument. There are twenty-four beautiful, informative plates superimposing multicoloured tracings of various painted figures, notably angels. (The majority of Hiller's tracings were done from the originals save for a few clearly stated cases where slides served as a basis). These tracings strongly support the author's contention that the workshops of Perugino and Raphael made wide and routine use of cartoons. Here, it might be said that Hiller's title is a trifle misleading, and that it might have focussed more directly on his leading argument, the cartoon. This is however to carp: Hiller's book is an original, provocative and significant contribution to a subject of great artistic significance.

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- 2 CHRISTA GARDNER VON TEUFFEL: The contract for Perugino's 'Assumption of the Virgin' at Vallombrosa, in: *The Burlington Magazine* 137, 1995, pp. 307–12.

**Louis Marin: Sublime Poussin**, transl. Catherine Porter (*Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics*); Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999; 267 pages, 17 b/w ill.; ISBN 0-8047-3477-1 (pbk.); \$ 16,95

Classicism, nature, artistic practice and its theoretical discourse are the four cliffs that the modern scholar has to sail around to end up with any text concerning the painter Nicolas Poussin. Having been claimed by all sorts of artistic currents from the seventeenth century until well into the nineteenth century, his work and his artistic

1 For a discussion of the nineteenth-century views on Poussin, see JOHN HOUSE: 'Cézanne and Poussin: Myth and History' in: *Cézanne & Poussin. A Symposium*; Richard Kendall (ed.), Sheffield 1993, p. 129 f.

personality have been put on Procrustean bed<sup>1</sup>. Poussin's French background contrasted with the Italian context of his work, clashing with predominantly French patronage, and ultimately, the French debates on art based on his work in the Academie Royale that were the first step to claim him as particularly French<sup>2</sup>. One of the major division-lines is drawn between Poussin as *peintre* or as *peintre-philosophe*. Did the painter follow any predetermined theory, or came his theoretical views as a result from the 'act of painting' itself?<sup>3</sup> The present book by Louis Marin, published posthumously (the original edition in french appeared in 1995<sup>4</sup>), takes a peculiar position in this discussion. It seems to distance itself from those historical views and 'negotiate' between the two prevailing images of Poussin, but is ultimately working from the hypothesis of the *peintre-philosophe*.

Louis Marin, it must be stressed, was not educated as art-historian, but as philosopher. His publications range from Picasso and Paul Klee to Philippe de Champaigne and Poussin, but are mainly directed at the relation between word, image and semiotics. His approach, as he stated himself, has many links with Derrida's ideas<sup>5</sup>. In the present book, the statement Poussin made in his letter of April 28, 1639 to Chantelou, to 'read the story and the picture' (which could also be translated with 'study the story and the picture') is cited repeatedly, to stress the painters occupation with the relation between text and image. Marin's approach in discussing this theme is by no means historical or contextually defined. The problems of the modern painter, being able to express in paint (or any other material, for that matter) the theoretical issues connected with the act of painting itself, are taken as equally valuable for the interpretation of Poussin's pictures. Marin concentrates on the interdependence of textual source and visual image, and by speculative method answers the questions that they pose.

In essence, this book is concentrating on the sensual aspect of perception, directed by the implicit theory discovered in the work of art itself. We may thus ask, why Poussin was taken as a subject for this study, and not any given post-Romantic painter. One reason certainly lies in the attractiveness of Poussin, whose image of *peintre-philosophe* was based on his oeuvre and the mass of later exhibitions on it – originating with the French Academicians. Their claim that Poussin had developed an intellectual idea on painting was founded upon an apocryphal story of a theoretical treatise composed by Poussin, which was never found. Neither have modern scholars been able to define just how far his theoretical basis went. It is striking, that

2 These debates, by Charles Le Brun and others, were given in André Félibien, *Entretiens sur les Vies et sur les Ouvrages des plus excellens Peintres anciens et modernes*, Paris 1688. See WILHELM SCHLINK: *Ein Bild ist kein Tatsachenbericht. Le Bruns Akademierede von 1667 über Poussins „Mannawunder“*; Freiburg i.B. 1996.

3 MICHAEL KITSON discusses that in relation to Blunt, in his article 'Blunt's Nicolas Poussin in context' in: *Commemorating Poussin. Reception and Interpretation of the Artist*; Katie Scott and Genevieve Warwick (eds.); Cambridge 1999, p. 222–224.

4 LOUIS MARIN: *Sublime Poussin*; Paris: Editions Du Seuil 1995.

5 VIANA CONTI: Louis Marin, in: *Flash Art International* 127, April 1986, p. 52–55.



almost any book on Poussin sees itself confined to citing from a small number of letters that express the painter's views on his art. Marin's fascination with the painter is not surprising, and follows in the footsteps of other publications that sought implicit evidence of the painter's intellectual scope in the paintings themselves<sup>6</sup>. The most important among these is Erwin Panofsky; Marin dedicated one of the studies brought together in this book to Panofsky's discussion of the two versions of 'Et in Arcadia ego'. Although at first it seems that Marin has completely surpassed Panofsky's ideas, there is indeed a link. This lies in the first step of iconographical research: the observation of the work of art itself. Marin provides lucid descriptions of the visual material, for example of Poussin's two self-portraits of 1649 and 1650. This intelligent verbal explanation of the image provides information without even beginning to interpret with external arguments. When Marin subsequently embarks upon an interpretation of those two paintings, however, his poetic but complicated language provides the reader with many complex thoughts rapidly lingering away from the historical context and the paintings themselves.

„Sublime Poussin“ contains ten chapters, either articles or lectures, which have one or more paintings by Poussin as starting-point. According to the introduction by the editors, Marin's aim was to write a book on the subject; its general outline is given in an appendix. His death in 1992 prevented the completion of this project. The deconstructivist line of thought makes it difficult to determine, whether the accumulated articles give any idea on this intended book. From an arthistorical point of view, its content is hard to grasp. The painting is being separated both from its original context, and even from its maker, and becomes an autonomously operating entity; it is an object that becomes a mirror, receiving the capacities of the onlooker in return. A painting can thus act, respond, greet, and react. Poussin's works are dismembered from their maker and context, and operate as any other work of modern art – that is, posing fundamental questions on composition through the composition itself. Concentration on this implicit discourse dismisses arguments, but makes the works into 'texts' – whether linguistic or visual – that can only explain themselves.

What does surprise, though, are the occasional arthistorical arguments occurring in the text – the frequent citation from Poussin's letters. As the historical intention of the maker does not hold any value in Marin's system, it has no function to relate the paintings to Poussin himself. Why Marin does mention the painter can only be guessed at, but he holds him in awe, as he is referred to as 'the Master'. The impression is that the status of Poussin as the French classicist *par excellence*, as was constructed by the Academy and nineteenth-century intellectuals, has been internalized. At the same time, Marin's rigorous negation of context makes him into the archetypal Painter, outside of time and place – and thus Sublime. That, in the last

6 Most recent of these, but with a primarily historical approach, is OSKAR BÄTSCHMANN: Nicolas Poussin. Dialectics of Painting; London 1990. Part I of this book was first published in German in 1982 as 'Dialektik der Malerei von Nicolas Poussin' by the Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zürich 1982.

chapter, has been 'defined' as the contraction of 'nature' with 'phantasia', the indefinable in-between. Just this is what Poussin presented Marin: the painter who was, and was not a theoretician. The book is thus essentially not about Poussin, but about painting, and more specifically, contemporary notions of art.

Marin's is also sensual book. The painting as the sleeping body, in the essay on the sleeping body in paintings, is well worth reading – for the love of literature and the versatility of the visual arts, but not for arthistorical reasons. It's not Poussin, it's not the work of art in itself, it is the projection of the onlooker onto the surface of the canvas that counts in this publication. As Marin stated, art-history does not exist without art-theory. When in this constellation theory overrules history, its validity in arthistory becomes a matter of discussion.

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**Paolo Nicoloso: Gli architetti di Mussolini.** Scuole e sindacato, architetti e massoni, professori e politici negli anni del regime (*Storia dell'architettura e della città; Saggi, 1*); Mailand: Angeli 1999; 239 S., ISBN 88-464-1305-9; Lit. 38.000

Weist der Titel direkt auf den engen Zusammenhang von Architektur und Faschismus hin, verspricht der Untertitel Aufklärung in der Betrachtung des Berufsstandes des Architekten und dessen Ausbildung, in Verbindung mit den verschiedensten politischen Kräften während der faschistischen Herrschaft in Italien. In dem auf dem Deckblatt des Buches abgebildeten *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*<sup>1</sup>, hat der von den faschistischen Kräften geforderte italo-nationalistische Baustil konkrete Gestalt angenommen. In dieser Funktion deutet er auf das Wechselspiel von Macht und Architektur unter Mussolinis Herrschaft hin.

Dem Leser bietet sich eine ausführliche Betrachtung der Geschichte der Architekturschulen und der Wandlung des Berufsbildes des Architekten, beginnend im Italien des späten 19. Jahrhunderts, über die schrittweise vollzogene Vereinnahmung der Architektur durch nationalistische Kräfte, bis hin zu den Umwälzungen der Nachkriegszeit. Der Bogen erstreckt sich von der Gründung der ersten Architekturschulen nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg bis zu deren Hinterfragung in den Vierziger Jahren, von der Eingliederung der Architekten in die faschistischen Syndikate bis zu deren Umwandlung in die heutige Berufsform, von der Besetzung der Lehrpulte bis zum Säuberungsprozess, von der durch die nationalistische Ideologie geprägten Schule bis zu einer Schulform, die sich nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zur sozialen Ideologie berufen fühlte. Auch der Ausblick auf die gegenwärtige architekturpolitische Situation in Italien wird nicht ausgespart.

1 Der *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* wurde anlässlich der nie ausgerichteten Weltausstellung 1942 in Rom, der EUR 42, erbaut. Vgl. MAURIZIO CALVESI u.a. (Hrsg.): E 42. Utopia e scenario del regime. Urbanistica, architettura, arte e decorazione; Rom 2. Aufl. 1992 (1. Aufl. 1987).