

Bestandteil seiner Produktion. Reni setzte sich bereits in der Akademie der Caracci intensiv mit Radierungen Parmigianinos auseinander und eignete sich dessen Technik an. Während seiner Zeit in Rom baute er sich ein Netzwerk von Druckern und Verlegern auf, um seine Bekanntheit über die Grenzen der Stadt hinaus zu mehren. Die Bedeutung dieser von Malvasia geschmähten Techniken für sein Œuvre bedarf weiterer Überlegungen. Denn auch nach seiner Rückkehr nach Bologna widmete sich Reni, gemeinsam mit seinem Schüler Cristoforo Coriolano, bis an sein Lebensende

der Druckgrafik. Reni erweist sich damit einmal mehr als Geschäftsmann, der in der Druckgrafik ein geeignetes Medium für weitere Einkünfte sah.

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## Guido Reni: A Tale of Two Cities

**Guido Reni.** Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 28.3.–9.7.2023. Cat. ed. by David García Cueto with Essays and Entries by Daniele Benati, Aoife Brady, Viviana Farina, David García Cueto, Rachel McGarry, Raffaella Morselli, Lorenzo Pericolo, Stefano Pierguidi, and Javier Portús. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado 2023. 448 p., 212 color, 13 b/w ill. ISBN 978-84-8480591-5. € 37,00

García Cueto. A comparative overview nonetheless seems in order.

**I.** There were 164 exhibits in Frankfurt, 96 in Madrid, though the disparity in size is partially explained by the 33 prints displayed only in Frankfurt. Both projects aptly incorporated examples of ancient sculpture in order to make evident Reni's significant interest in Antique sculpture, as well as some paintings by Reni's teachers, Denys Calvaert and Ludovico and Annibale Carracci. Only 27 of Reni's paintings, and just four of his drawings, were exhibited in both venues. Neither installation was strictly chronological but organized in overlapping, rather amorphous themes, such as "The Beauty of the Divine Body", "The Superhuman Anatomies of Gods and Heroes", and "Flesh and Drapery" in the Prado. As for the installations and lighting, which are so important for appreciation and study of the works, they were superior in Frankfurt.

Leaving aside the excellent presentation of Reni's prints in the Städel, the primary difference in the content of the exhibitions is that, while the one in the Städel was selected to display the best of Reni's art, the exhibition in Madrid was organized as an investigation of "Reni and Spain". As a

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**I**t is unusual for two large, different exhibitions devoted to the same artist to take place in the same year, as occurred during 2022–23, when exhibitions of Guido Reni's paintings, drawings and prints were on view in two cities, Frankfurt (the Städel) and Madrid (the Prado). The former, curated by Bastian Eclercy, was reviewed by this author in the *Burlington Magazine* 165, 2023, 308–12. These notes therefore focus on aspects of the Madrid exhibition, curated by David



Fig. 1 Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness, left: Guido Reni (?), oil on canvas, 230 x 140 cm. Salamanca, Madres Agustinas Recoletas, Convento de la Purísima; in the middle: Reni, c. 1633/34. Oil on canvas, 225,4 x 162,2 cm. London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; right: Reni (?), oil on canvas, 216 x 144 cm. Bologna, Palazzo Bentivoglio (Cat. Madrid, pp. 209, 211, 213)



consequence, the choice of exhibits in the Prado was expressly motivated by the history of collecting in Spain and Reni's reception in Spanish art. To that end, a few paintings by Jusepe de Ribera, Francisco Zurbarán and Bartolomé Murillo were juxtaposed with Reni's, and three of the nine essays in the catalogue focus on Reni and Spain. Its weighty catalogue is published in Spanish and English editions. Only one of the essays in the Madrid catalogue, by Aoife Brady, on Reni's materials and technique appeared in the Frankfurt catalogue.

**II.** David Cueto's lead essay, "Guido Reni: a Bolognese Genius for Golden Age Spain", is very informative about the enthusiastic collecting, and copying, of Reni's art in Spain, at least as early as the 1620s, despite the rarity of references to the painter by seventeenth-century Spanish art theorists. Acquisitions often were made through Spanish viceroys and ambassadors. Essays by Stefano Pierguidi and Javier Portús complement Cueto's:

Fig. 2 Guido Reni, Bacchus and Ariadne, c. 1617–19. Oil on canvas, 222,5 x 147 cm. Private collection (Cat. Madrid, p. 307)



Fig. 3 Guido Reni, *Saint James the Greater* (details), c. 1626. Oil on canvas, 132,3 x 98,8 cm. Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 2002-10 (left); c. 1626. Oil on canvas, 135 x 89 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado, P-212 (right) [Cat. Madrid, pp. 251, 250]

“Viceroys, Ambassadors, Agents, Theologians: Thirty Years of (Stormy) Relations Between Guido Reni and Spain” and “Guido Reni and Seventeenth Century Spanish Painting”, respectively. Pierguidi raises the interesting idea that G. B. Crescenzi, who was well positioned for the task, was the “mastermind” behind the ambitious program to decorate the New Hall of the Alcázar, for which Reni’s famous *Abduction of Helen* (Louvre, Paris) was commissioned in 1627 but never delivered due to Reni’s quarrel with the Spanish ambassador. Portús traces Reni’s reception by artists from J. B. Maino, Ribera (whom Reni admired), possibly Diego Velázquez and Zurbarán, Alonso Cano (optimistically dubbed “the Guido Reni of Spain”), and, above all, Murillo.

The other essays in the Madrid catalogue are by Lorenzo Pericolo (“*Novità: Guido Reni and Modernity*”), which portrays the poorly-educated artist as a self-conscious, sophisticated art theorist; Rachel McGarry (“‘Like a Bee Amongst the Flowers’: Young Guido Reni Between Bologna and Rome”), a detailed, up-to-date account of Reni’s early work; Raffaella Morselli (“The ‘Most Distinguished Compatriot Guido Reni’, Glory of

Bologna”); Viviana Farina (“‘A Man Who Perpetually Consults Nature’: Guido Reni and Drawing”) – Farina also wrote all of the very good entries on the drawings; and Daniele Benati (“Guido Reni: A Master Without a School?”). The last of these titles might seem puzzling in light of Reni’s well-known, highly active studio, but it is only a semantic issue over the use of the word *scuola*.

**III.** The Frankfurt exhibition, by focusing on Reni’s best work that could be borrowed, did full justice to the artist. That was not the case for the Madrid show, even though it included some outstanding loans not seen in Frankfurt – the *Massacre of the Innocents* in Bologna (cat. 20), the *Circumcision* in Siena (21), the version of *Hippomenes and Atalanta* in Naples (62), and notably the large *Triumph of Job* from Notre Dame in Paris (44). Surprisingly, given that Reni executed at least three paintings on silk during the 1630s, it was not used for this commission from Bologna’s silk guild. Perhaps it would have been too costly for such a large painting (415 x 265 cm), although the *Pala della Peste* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) is on silk and is nearly as big (382 x 242 cm). There, however, the



weight of the support probably was a key factor because it was a processional banner. The loan from Naples was withdrawn for another exhibition at the Louvre before I or the attendees at the two-day symposium on 15–16 June could compare the two versions of the painting. When I viewed them together in Bologna in 1988 (*Guido Reni. 1575–1642,*

cat. 27–28), I wrote in the margin of the catalogue, “in all, it is not a simple matter, though the Madrid version generally has the edge.” (For contrary opinions, see the references in Richard E. Spear, *The Divine Guido. Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni*, New Haven/London 1997, 373, Fn. 74.)



Among those and the other paintings by Reni's hand, many problematic works were exhibited as autograph, diluting the measure of Reni's talent. Those include the Prado's own *St. Sebastian* (cat. 19), which, despite a recent cleaning, is best categorized as Reni's studio due to its slick modelling and prosaic handling of the loincloth and landscape. It is inferior to the version in the Louvre. The splendid *St. John Preaching in the Desert* from Dulwich (23) was hung between depictions of the same subject in Salamanca (22) and Bologna (24) **fig. 1**. Seeing it in that context raised doubts about the status of those other paintings. Gabriele Finaldi's reported suggestion that the former might be by Simone Cantarini is worth consideration, as would be Michele Desubleo's name for the version in Bologna.

While not unpublished, neither of those works, like the *Susanna and the Elders* (90) discussed below, is well-known in the Reni literature, nor is the *Bacchus and Ariadne* (58, **fig. 2**) from a private collection. If its

**Fig. 4** Studio of Guido Reni, *Saint Francis in Prayer with two Angels*, c. 1632. Oil on canvas, 196 x 117 cm. Rome, Galleria Colonna, inv. 117 (Cat. Madrid, p. 260)

**Fig. 5** Guido Reni and Studio, *The Virgin and Child with Saints Lucy and Mary Magdalene (Madonna della Neve)*, c. 1623. Oil on canvas, 250 x 176 cm. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, inv. 1890 n. 3088 (Cat. Madrid, p. 291)



early provenance in the Zambeccari collection in Bologna favors the attribution, as does its handling and the seascape setting, it nonetheless is an uninspired, stilted rendition of a story that has strong affective potential. Here, as in Reni's other versions of the myth, Carlo Cesare Malvasia's remark is brought to mind that the artist was "poorly acquainted with mythology," which "hurt him a lot as a history painter". Malvasia personally knew Reni in his later years and relates that the painter acknowledged his inability "to make a pictorial narrative" (*Carlo Cesare Malvasia. Felsina Pittrice. Lives of the Bolognese Painters*. Vol. IX: *Life of Guido Reni*, ed. Lorenzo Pericolo, London/Turnhout 2019, 118f.).

The questions of whether *Christ at the Column* (25, see **figs. 3, 4** and **5** in the review of the Frankfurt exhibition in this issue of *Kunstchronik*, 479ff.) was painted before or after Domenichino's comparable *Christ at the Column* (private collection) of 1603, and whether or not it reflects Caravaggio's style, are discussed in my review of the Frankfurt exhibition. There I did not comment on its doubtful attribution, which I had done on previous occasions (Spear 1997, 385, Fn. 23 and 391, Fn. 111). Aside from lacking any documentary evidence that the picture is by Reni, it is difficult to find convincing parallels in his work. Tellingly, in neither Eclercy's entry on the painting in the Frankfurt catalogue (32) nor in Maria Cristina Terzaghi's entry in the Madrid catalogue, are there references to any comparable

paintings by Reni. Rachel McGarry, too, who wrote her dissertation on *The Young Guido Reni: The Artist in Bologna and Rome, 1575–1605* (Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, 2007), in her catalogue essay tacitly rejects the attribution. As she rightly pointed out to me, were the painting by Reni, either at the time or shortly after he was lodged at Santa Prassede (the assumed date of the picture), it is quite unlikely that he would have represented the church's venerated relic, the column of the Flagellation, so inaccurately. Not only is it much too tall, but it is made of the wrong stone and has the wrong color.

**IV.** In the spirit of reexamining received attributions as trustworthy, a sort of connoisseurial challenge to *stare decisis*, one can venture to reopen the case of two versions of *St. James the Greater* by doubting, on the basis of the different handling **fig.**



Fig. 6 Guido Reni (?), Eri-gone. Tempera and oil over black chalk on two sheets partially superimposed and joined, 45,9 x 58,8 cm. New York, private collection (Cat. Madrid, p. 352)

3, that, as proposed, they could be of the same date, around 1626. The version in Houston (cat. 39) surely is autograph, while the one in the Prado (38), which is of no lesser quality, is subtly more naturalistic in tonality and brushwork, provocatively bringing Ribera to mind.

*St. Francis in Prayer* from the Galleria Colonna (42, fig. 4) “enjoyed pride of place in the gallery

since it was founded in the early eighteenth century”, but that long tradition does not guarantee its attribution. The painting has a troublesome, superficial cosmetic beauty, a facile attractiveness that lacks the emotive force of Reni’s autograph work. Moreover, it is a plain pastiche, the angels having been taken, simply flipped over, from the *Penitent Magdalene* (86), while the figure of the



Fig. 7 Guido Reni (?), Susanna and the Elders. Oil on canvas, 110 x 140 cm. Private collection (Author)



saint is lifted directly from the monumental *Pala della Peste* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna). One can imagine a studio assistant relying on those famous models as a shortcut to success.

The doubtful status of both *Hercules and the Hydra* (48) and a *St. Cecilia* (87) is discussed in my Frankfurt review. The frigid, high-waisted women in the *Madonna della Neve* (53, **fig. 5**) belie Reni's personal involvement in its execution. Likewise, only Reni's design is behind the *St. Catherine* (84). A more difficult question is whether the Prado's *Cleopatra* (79) is an autograph variant of the superior version in the English Royal Collection (80) or if, as Stephen Pepper catalogued it, it is a variant copy of very high quality.

Two other works exhibited in Madrid are especially perplexing because, were they autograph, they would be unique in Reni's oeuvre. *Erigone* (75, **fig. 6**), regardless of its correspondence with a figure in the *Toilet of Venus* in London (74), a painting that was in Spain during the second half of the seventeenth century, cannot, as Pericolo recognizes, be a cartoon for that studio picture. Technically it is peculiar, being painted partly in oil, partly in tempera, on two sheets of joined paper. It matches a painting of *Erigone* of similar size (location unknown), yet their relationship is unclear, since the small canvas (59 x 66 cm) clearly would not require a cartoon. Whether either *Erigone* is by Reni remains questionable.

The monochromatic, sketchy *Susanna and the Elders* (90, **fig. 7**) is unlike any painting by Reni. It cannot be a full-size *bozzetto* for an easel painting, which Reni never made – to do so would entail pointless labor, as David Stone has argued with regard to Guercino's spurious "*bozzettoni*" (Up for Attribution: Guercino's "Trial Versions" and a New Catalogue Raisonné, in: *Burlington Magazine* 161, 2019, 208–11). While it is intimately related in design to *Susanna and the Elders* in London of c. 1623–24 (89), stylistically it is later. Despite its bold sketchiness, the uniform, overall degree of (un)finish is not typical of Reni's *non finito* paintings, which usually reveal diverse stages of finish. Moreover, by the time Reni brought his late canvases to this advanced stage, he typically had

added some color, especially some flesh tones. It is a strange painting, difficult to categorize, but it likely was executed after Reni's death when the master's *non finito* canvases were appreciated on the Bolognese market.

**V.** Regardless of these problems of attribution, the entries in the Madrid catalogue are commendable and generally more scholarly and substantial than those in the Frankfurt catalogue. The Madrid catalogue is admirably edited and excellently translated into English. One slip to note is that the *Salome Receiving the Head of St. John the Baptist* (a variant, in reverse, of the Chicago painting [82]) referred to by Pericolo (p. 370) as deserving close scrutiny, actually is illustrated by Benati in the catalogue (fig. 57) as by the mediocre Fleming Jan van Dalen. Neither catalogue, however, benefits from the broader, socially conscious approaches of art history developed during recent decades. It is ironic that a stated aim of the Prado exhibition, according to David Cueto, was to "examine [...] what Reni means to our day" (p. 15). Yet, that is precisely what is missing, an effort to look anew at Reni's work from a contemporary art-historical perspective.

For instance, none of the authors of the essays, nor the team who wrote the catalogue entries, questions if Reni's well-documented idiosyncratic personality, such as his fanatical fear of women, might have affected the painter's imagery. (Further gaps in the Madrid catalogue concern citations of relevant literature. For example, in the entry for the *Anima Beata* (96), a long discussion of the theological context of this unusual painting in Spear 1997, 315–20, is neither considered nor cited by Pericolo.) Other than for some passing references to his gambling, Reni's character, even his extreme devotion to the Virgin and piety, is broadly unremarked, not due to neglect but by design: "It is time we leave behind the trite construct of Guido the Catholic image-maker" (Pericolo, p. 41), even though that was Reni's primary mission as an artist (significantly, 43 of the 59 paintings attributed to Reni in the Madrid exhibition have religious subjects).

An approach benefitting from feminist, psychological, and gender studies, as explored by this author in *The Divine Guido*, Cueto rejects as “prejudiced assessment”. That forthright dismissal raises weighty methodological questions if what Cueto rejects as “personal viewpoints” (p. 19) are unsuited to art historical discourse. Were that a tenable position, then what should one make of Malvasia’s personal opinions? Are his, or Francesco Scannelli’s or G. P. Bellori’s observations more objective and more admissible because they were recorded during the seventeenth century? As Pericolo unwittingly notes in this regard, Malvasia broadly characterized “Guido’s world” as “one governed by novelty;” but then the biographer reversed his view and explained that Reni’s world was “one ruled by canonical tradition” (p. 31). Which of those conflicting opinions is right? Is either an objective interpretation?

The level of esteem for the “divine” Guido during his lifetime and for the next two centuries is hard to restore in a secularized audience for which the message of religious fervor expressed through graceful figures with upturned eyes in adoration and awe is so distant from modern concerns. Nevertheless, thanks to projects such as the Frankfurt and Madrid exhibitions, these have been the best of times for Guido. That is true as well for specialized Reni scholarship, in particular due to publication of the critical English translation of Malvasia’s life of Reni (on which see this author’s review in *Kunstchronik* 74/6, 2021, 294–304).

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## Bauen und Entwerfen im Zeichen von Kreuz und Liktorenbündel

Luigi Monzo  
**croci e fasci. Der italienische  
Kirchenbau in der Zeit des**

**Faschismus.** Berlin/München,  
Deutscher Kunstverlag 2021.

784 S., 355 s/w und 10 farbige Abb.  
ISBN 978-3-422-98050-1. € 138,00

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**L**uigi Monzo spannt mit seiner Arbeit einen weiten Bogen der Sakralarchitektur Italiens zwischen 1919 und 1945 und widmet sich damit einer Zeit technischer, politischer und gesellschaftlicher Umbrüche und Spannungen, die an der Architektur – insbesondere an einer Baugattung, die zahlreiche Erwartungshaltungen zu erfüllen hatte – nicht spur-

los vorüberzogen. Das umfangreiche Buch basiert auf dem für die Publikation überarbeiteten und gekürzten Manuskript der Dissertation, die Monzo 2017 im Fachgebiet Baugeschichte des Karlsruher Instituts für Technologie eingereicht hat (<https://publikationen.bibliothek.kit.edu/1000071873>). Das aus italienischen Beständen erschlossene und für die deutsche Forschung zugänglich gemachte Material zu zahlreichen Wettbewerben, Neubauten und Entwürfen wird nicht systematisch, sondern nach regionalen Bauaufträgen bzw. nach einer themenspezifischen Bündelung von Bauaktivitäten präsentiert.

Sowohl der Titel als auch eine vorangestellte inhaltliche Zusammenfassung (16–20) verweisen auf eine Phase der Architekturgeschichte, in der sich umfassende technische, materialbasierte und formgebende Innovationen zwar durchsetzten, sich jedoch zugleich im Kontext des Faschismus