

figer. Sie können den ungewöhnlichen Wert dieses Beitrags nicht mindern, der gerade recht kommt zu Albertis 600stem Geburtstag. Ein

ungemein anregendes Buch, eine auch unterhaltsame Lektüre überdies. Die Diskussion ist eröffnet.

Hans-Karl Lücke

DAVID FRANKLIN

Painting in Renaissance Florence 1500-1550

New Haven and London, Yale University Press 2001. 273 pp., Ill. ISBN 0-300-08399-8

The period which David Franklin has set out to examine in his new book is the one which Giorgio Vasari in his *Lives* termed the modern epoch. In this first history of western art, issued in Florence in 1550, and in a revised edition in 1568, Vasari divided art into three periods, comparable to childhood, youth and maturity in life. An age of juvenile experiments had started with Giotto; it was followed by an improved age, youthful but greatly advanced in which "the truth of nature was exactly imitated". And finally there had come the modern, mature age, Vasari's own: at once graceful, inventive, diverse and accomplished, studded with a range of artistic giants like Leonardo, Raphael, Titian and Michelangelo. The latter was a universal genius and represented the most absolute perfection. Beyond him Vasari virtually saw nothing, but he seems to have suspected a decline comparable to old age which follows man's maturity.

To project the new style into more effective relief Vasari placed 15th-century art on a relatively inferior plane. Although he thought that nature should be kept steadily in view, he found the art of the 15th century too simply natural. The best modern works were idealized beyond nature. Ease, softness of tone and blend of light and shade were key components of the "new" style. Whereas he saw a dramatic break between the style of the 15th and 16th centuries, he saw no incongruity between the art works of the earlier and later parts of the period he called the modern. This view was apparently shared by his contemporaries. Scholars of later centuries, however, tended to

ignore much of the art of the second and third generations of the Cinquecento, and it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that a group of Central European art historians led by scholars like Max Dvořák, Lili Fröhlich-Bum and Walter Friedländer noticed a difference in style between the first and second generation. Holding up the art of the past as a mirror for the expressionist art of their own time they felt that after c. 1520 art expressed a spiritual rootlessness and a crisis similar to what they experienced themselves in the wake of the Great War. They distinguished between two styles in this period: the High Renaissance characterized by works which were calm, balanced and harmonious, a somewhat fossilized moment of equilibrium in strong contrast to the period starting around 1520, which they saw as a widely dispersed, complete style of its own, and which they labelled Mannerism borrowed from the word *maniera* which Vasari had used as an expression of praise for works covering the whole "modern" period. Troubled, neurotic and anti-social artists like Pontormo, Rosso and Parmigianino were presented as typical mannerists and their style was explained as a reaction to social upheavals like the Sack of Rome in 1527. But this does not work very well. Mannerist artists like Giulio Romano, Bronzino and Vasari were socially assimilated and highly successful, and the Sack of Rome was the result of a series of wars which had ravaged Italy ever since the French invasion of 1494 and thus coincided with the period of the High Renaissance. So as 20th Century pro-

gressed new observations, trends and meanings were attached to the term. "Poise, refinement and sophistication ... works of art that were polished, rarefied and idealized away from the natural" were some of the expressions carefully selected by John Shearman in his *Mannerism* of 1967. Other characteristics of the style were grace and elegance. But much of this could also be said about High Renaissance art. The interpretation of the Mannerist style as a reaction against High Renaissance values began to yield for the idea that Mannerism developed out of High Renaissance. After the end of the Cold War and its political and social polarization scholars became increasingly aware of ambiguities in every field. Human achievements are increasingly studied as single efforts alienated from society and environment. It has become clear that different styles have lived side by side in almost every society at almost any time, and that a style in art is not comparable to a team shirt which the artist put on to join the game, but comes into existence through the achievements of individual artists who may be rivals in many ways as were Leonardo and Michelangelo.

In his new book David Franklin follows this trend and challenges the applicability of the term "Mannerism" to Florentine painting in the first half of the 16th century. In his own words one of his main purposes is "to examine the basis of the term High Renaissance and alter what might be meant by the mannerist period". Although he does manage to demonstrate how uncomfortably the labels High Renaissance and Mannerism fit the actual achievements of the artists the book is not as concerned with this aspect as one would expect. This is mainly due to the disposition of the book into a series of chapters each focused on a single major figure and his followers. It gives Franklin the possibility to treat a number of minor artists like Antonio di Donnino Mazzieri, Jacopo dell'Indaco, Giovanni Larciani, Baccio Ghetti and Jacone, who have hitherto not been included in broad surveys,

and that is certainly one of the merits of the book; but Franklin's overall concern »to promote heterogeneity, not linearity« makes it almost impossible to follow the artistic development in Florence chronologically. Transverse trends, mutual influences, and fashions followed and dropped by different artists at various moments are difficult to discuss within this framework, and inconsistency in the approach to the careers of the different artists makes it still harder for the reader to form an impression of what happened since some artists are treated chronologically, others thematically. This disposition is oddly reminiscent of Vasari's *Lives* and this is unfortunate since the period with which we are concerned was Vasari's own time which he of course could not assess. One also suspects that the reason for the curious fact that Franklin has left out Bronzino is that Vasari only treated him briefly among the *Accademici del Disegno* in the 1568 edition of his *Lives*. Franklin's sympathies are clearly with the artists of the second generation whom he divides into two groups: the conservatives and the innovators. The mature del Sarto, Pontormo and Rosso, who worked together on several occasions, are the leading innovators, who, it is claimed, reacted against the conservatives, whose main representative was Fra Bartolommeo's follower Ridolfo Ghirlandaio.

Like Wölfflin Franklin is not comfortable with the 'classic' artists of the High Renaissance. But unlike Wölfflin, who made a tremendous effort to try to understand their goals and intentions, Franklin's treatment of them stays on the surface. By referring to the fact that none of these painters were directly affected by Antiquity and thus cannot be estimated by Wölfflin's term 'classical', which Franklin has misunderstood as "a distillation of qualities from ancient art", he sets aside an expression which, although not applied by Vasari and his contemporaries, has proved very useful for analysing the works by the artists of the first

generation of the Cinquecento. The usual meaning of 'classical', however, relates to the achievement of harmony: The balancing geometry of the composition or, as aptly affirmed by Sidney Freedberg, "the distillation of the individual data of nature into representative types imbued with a slow pulse of life and an other-worldliness which resembles, in its essence that of Greek classical sculpture".

Deprived of the discernments offered by the term 'classic' Franklin relegates Fra Bartolommeo to an inferior position. Fra Bartolommeo was held in high esteem by Vasari who praises him for his fine colorism and "for his introduction of the toning of the figures, a great gain to art, as they seem to be in relief, and are executed with vigour and perfection", essential qualities of the High Renaissance style. Fra Bartolommeo was a "member" of the quartet who conceived this style in the 1490s (the other participants were Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo), playing a role comparable to Braque's in the creation of Cubism in Paris around 1906. He left a conspicuous mark on Florentine painting because he remained in his native city while the others left. Fra Bartolommeo was thus assigned with the part of the maintainer and propagator of the new style and it is mainly his version of it, manifested in a number of altarpieces in Florence, which became the reference for the following generations of Florentine artists, few of whom travelled far to receive impressions from abroad. It is probably the same uneasiness with the 'classic' which has made Franklin ignore Raphael's influence on Florentine painting, although his unfinished *Madonna del Baldacchino*, and many of his other Florentine Madonnas cast long shadows on early Cinquecento Florentine painting.

Raphael was admired by Vasari. He was an artist who achieved a new elevated status, who lived like a prince, accepted by all the great in Rome. He organized his workshop with admirable ability, made arrangements with

Marcantonio for issuing of engravings after his designs and chose "from the work of other painters to form from many different styles one that was for always held his own". Vasari's treatment of Pontormo is contrary. He is criticised for being indecisive and uncertain of his aims. Other artists like Piero di Cosimo, Bacchiacca, Jacone and Baccio Bandinelli are criticized for their unsocial behaviour and extravagant or bizarre manners. Franklin interprets this attitude as a sign that Vasari misunderstood Florentine art and that he was more sympathetic with Roman art at the time, the ideals of which Franklin considers fundamentally different from those found in Florence. However, for Vasari it was imperative to increase the prestige of the arts and their performers and his reproaches of these Florentine artists should rather be seen as indications of this aim than a manifestation that "the Florentine tradition was insufficient for Vasari's needs". Furthermore Vasari's views on Pontormo and the other Florentine artists just mentioned appear to have been shared by other art critics of his time as was the admiration for Raphael. Pictorial narratives were the most prestigious type of painting, and Raphael its supreme agent. It developed and unfolded in the much more wealthy Rome which thus gained primacy early in the century at the cost of Florence, but the fact that Vasari was aware of this does not necessarily mean that his sympathies had shifted away from Florence.

Franklin is primarily concerned with style. His method is almost exclusively based on formalist analysis. This is not an enviable position to put oneself in since it is almost impossible to rival Wölfflin and Freedberg who in the past have given us admirable formalist treatments of the period. The social setting is almost absent from Franklin's book and that is a shame since in this period great changes seem to have taken place in the relations between painter and patron, and in society's response to the arts in general. Who knows

what unexpected prospects would be revealed if analysis of style was combined with investigation of the social background. Franklin is one of the most knowledgeable scholars in the field, he knows more about these contexts than any man alive. In the past he has shown

great aptitude for treating documents and the relations between patrons and artists, so it is a pity that he has not grasped the opportunity to offer us a book where style and social environment are studied in their mutual dependence.

Chris Fischer

ARIANE MENSGER

Jan Gossaert. Die niederländische Kunst zu Beginn der Neuzeit

Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag 2002. 239 S., 117 s/w Abb. ISBN 3-496-01266-8 € 64,-.

Jan Gossaerts Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der niederländischen Kunst wurde schon früh erkannt, doch beschränkte sich eine angemessene Würdigung seines Œuvres lange Zeit auf Friedländers 8. Band der *Altniederländischen Malerei* (Berlin 1930). Die dort aufgeworfenen Fragen hinsichtlich der Eigenhändigkeit, Chronologie oder stilistischen Entwicklung wurden in der Ausstellung *Jan Gossaert genaamd Mabuse* (Rotterdam und Brügge 1965) und den sie begleitenden Kolloquiumsbeiträgen (veröffentlicht im *Bulletin Museum Boymans-van Beuningen*, Rotterdam 1968) weiter verfolgt, neue Quellen gesichtet und publiziert. Jüngere Beiträge haben sich zunehmend inhaltlichen und soziokulturellen Aspekten einzelner Werke oder Themenkomplexe zugewandt. Ariane Mensgers Untersuchung wird daher zu Recht als »erste ausführliche Monographie [...] nach Jahrzehnten« bezeichnet (Klappentext). Dies ist aber insofern irreführend, als es der Autorin nicht um eine Betrachtung der Chronologie oder Zusammenstellung des Œuvres geht – auch wenn es hier, insbesondere das Frühwerk und sein Verhältnis zu den Antwerpener Manieristen betreffend, durchaus noch Klärungsbedarf gibt. Mensger beabsichtigt eine »Präzisierung und möglicherweise Neudefinition« von Gossaerts Schaffen und richtet ihr Interesse dabei auf das gesellschaftlich-kulturelle Umfeld von Maler und Auftraggeber sowie die Funktion und Rezeption der Werke (S. 16). Die Darstel-

lung ist im Rahmen dieser Fragestellung chronologisch gegliedert und berücksichtigt das Gros des Œuvres.

Nach einem biographischen und rezeptionsgeschichtlichen Überblick widmen sich zwei Kapitel den retrospektiven Tendenzen in Gossaerts Schaffen (22ff.). Während die ältere Forschung erhebliche Probleme hatte, die teils nach der Italienreise 1508/09 entstandenen, spätgotischen oder archaischen Werke stilistisch einzuordnen, verweist Mensger auf den »Pluralismus in ästhetischen Konzepten« (22), also das für die niederländische Kunst dieser Zeit charakteristische Nebeneinander von Flamboyant, Stil-Archaismus und an die Antike oder italienische Renaissance angelehnten Formen. Sie verdeutlicht plausibel, daß die Entscheidung für eines dieser Konzepte eine bewußte, von der Funktion oder dem Auftraggeber des Werks abhängige Auswahl darstellte.

So kennzeichnen die Reminiszenzen an die Brügger Schule und spätgotische Stilelemente das wohl als Exportstück für Italien konzipierte *Malvagna-Triptychon* (Palermo, Galleria Regionale) als typisch flämisches Produkt (29f.); eine »Strategie«, die wiederholt für die Exportproduktion Antwerpener und Brüsseler Retabel festgestellt worden ist. Die gegenüber dem *Genter Altar* in der *Deesis* (Madrid, Prado) vorgenommenen Abwandlungen, z. B. die Reduktion zum Halbfigurenbild, deutet Mensger als Stellungnahme zur Bilderfrage in