Pontormo Restored: New and "Miraculous" Encounters with the Painter

Bruce Edelstein/
Davide Gasparotto (Ed.)
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Pontormo: Painting in an Age of Anxiety. International Conference, Los Angeles, UCLA, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies & The J. Paul Getty Museum, 10./11. February 2019

From a charged greeting between sacred figures, to the quasi-divine experience of a viewer before a work of art, the eponymous 2019 exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum did, indeed, enfold a multiplicity of "miraculous encounters." Taking as its focal point Jacopo Pontormo's stunning *Visitation* (ca. 1528–30; *fig. 2*), the exhibition condensed its focus to a small group of works thought to have been executed by that artist and his pupil, Agnolo Bronzino, during the tumultuous years of 1528 to 1530 – that is, from the time of the Medici expulsion from Florence to the subsequent siege, and surrender, of that city. While such recent monographic exhibits as the 2014 *Pontormo: dibujos* (Fundación Mapfre, Madrid) have portrayed Pontormo as a highly-eccentric "tortured soul," *Miraculous Encounters: Pontormo* follows a normalizing approach to this artist more often reserved for shows of broader scope, as in *Maniera: Pontormo, Bronzino and Medici Florence* (Städel Museum, Frankfurt a. M. 2016) and *Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino: Diverging Paths of Mannerism* (Palazzo Strozzi, Florence 2014). The latest Pontormo exhibition, catalogue, and attendant conference broadly seeks to "de-mystify" the artist on two fronts: first through historical contextualization against the grim backdrop of the Florentine siege, and second through a clarification of his working process, as generated by the integrated display of finished paintings with their still-extant preparatory drawings.

PAINTING BEYOND MANNERISM

Unlike its more expansive Städel Museum and Palazzo Strozzi counterparts, however, the sticky concepts of "Mannerism" or "maniera" were nowhere addressed in *Miraculous Encounters*. This seems, on the one hand, a wise choice. The bold and raw experimentalism of works like Pontormo's from the late 1520s and 30s has never quite fit the mold of, in particular, John Shearman's predominating conception of Mannerism as a vacuous and over-bred "stylish style" (Shearman, *Mannerism*, Harmondsworth 1967). Recent contributions by Hans Aurenhammer, for one, have acknowledged the inadequacies and exclusions perpetuated by such a rigid understanding of Mannerism, and even begun the process of reintegrating such early-phase works into a critically-interrogated comprehension of the epoch (see Aurenhammer, Manner, Mannerism, "maniera": On the History of a Controversial Term, in: *Maniera: Pontormo, Bronzino and Medici Florence*, Munich 2016, 14–23). However, despite this reignited interest, the organizers at the Getty are not alone in wishing to

set the designation mostly aside. Semi-regular surges of terminological revision – chiefly the 1920s "rehabilitation" of Mannerism and the mid-60s spate of reactionary publications – have left an unfortunate legacy of circuitous and pedantic squabbling around the appellation. It is perhaps to the relief of many scholars that *Miraculous Encounters* was small and thematically-contained enough to be able to forgo engagement with that broader, but also often ill-fitting and controversial classification "Mannerist art."

Though only one room, *Miraculous Encounters* made a powerful and coherent statement through its exquisite selection of works and careful organization. Upon entry, a copy of Giorgio Vasari's 1568 *Lives* – opened to Pontormo's haggard-looking visage – was juxtaposed with the languid and youthful sketched self-portrait of the artist. This neatly conveyed the organizers' overarching intent to reevaluate Pontormo's "Vasarian" reputation as a highly eccentric and even neurotic painter (or, at least, to emend the traditional *reading* of Vasari's visual and textual commentary in this case; for more on this longstanding historiographic exaggeration of Vasari, see Elizabeth Pilliod's catalogue entry on the *Lives* portrait). Moving through the exhibit, the visitor was granted a rarified glimpse into the "backstage" of artistic production, which did indeed render Pontormo more intellectually accessible. The visual resonance between Durer's print *Four Naked Women* (1497) and the kitty-corner *Visitation* offered an explanation of sorts for Pontormo's statuesque and compressed figural representation there, while the display of a squared preparatory drawing *(fig. 1)* asked the visitor to acknowledge the concrete labor – the processes of drawing, redrawing and transferring – by which the artist produced that painting. Switching to the secular realm, along the opposite wall Pontormo's siege-era portraits *Halberdier* (ca. 1529–30; *fig. 4*) and *Young Man in a Red Cap* (ca. 1530) were grouped, along with Bronzino's *Pygmalion* (ca. 1530), thought to have originally formed a cover for the *Halberdier*. Again, these arresting paintings were brought partially into the realm of everyday production by means of adjacent works. The somewhat-hesitant sketches of young, armed men that occupied the final wall testified to Pontormo's original unfamiliarity with siege-era military dress, the prosaic necessity for the artist to practice representing those new forms. United by their common origin in Florence during the years of the siege (ca. 1528–30), the *Visitation* and the portrait groupings each speak to Pontormo's hard-won industry amidst a difficult and uncertain age.

Unquestionably the *Visitation* (ca. 1528–29; *fig. 2*) was the show-stopping focal point of *Miraculous Encounters*. Alone and left boldly unframed, its colors glowed against the dark blue of the far wall of the exhibition space. Ironically, it is perhaps that unfettered, commanding visual presence which most disturbs the straightforward and down-to-earth narrative so carefully laid out by curators Bruce Edelstein and Davide Gasparotto. Gazing at this work, one cannot repress a visceral sense that it is somehow "out of time." Here, as George Didi-Huberman astutely describes, there is a sort of fundamental anachronicity: the *Visitation* is acutely "modern" and shockingly surreal, albeit long before the age of surrealism (see Didi-Huberman, Before the Image, Before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism, in: *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History*, Minneapolis 2003, 31–44). Such cognitive dissonance was not to the detriment of this exhibition: rather, it breathes new life into the experience by opening up a broader discursive space. Edelstein and Gasparotto should be proud of their accomplishment not only in bringing the singular *Visitation* to U.S. audiences for the first time, but in staging arguably the most intimate and complete possible viewing of it: fresh off of a 2013–14 restoration, the museum-goer was even granted a glimpse at the gesso-dripped sides of this thick panel painting, sans-frame. Pontormo's *Portrait of a Young Man in a Red Cap (fig. 3)* was another exciting addition to the exhibit. Only re-discovered in the past decade, and the recent bone of contention in a dramatic clash between a private collector and the London National Gallery (see https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/tom-hill-pontormo-1453168), *Young Man in a Red Cap* was also on its first public showing in the United States.

THE CONFERENCE I: A MASTERFUL BRUSH IN AN "ANXIOUS" AGE

Over two days, ten speakers presented at the affiliated conference entitled "Pontormo: Painting in an Age of Anxiety," jointly hosted by the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the J. Paul Getty Museum. The years of Pontormo's maturity did certainly coincide with a particularly desperate, uncertain and anguish-ridden epoch in Florentine history. Having ousted its Medici rulers following the 1527 Sack of Rome, the newly-established Florentine Republic was soon dealt a devastating blow. In late 1529 – while still suffering the aftereffects of a plague epidemic – the city was subjected to an eleven-month siege by the forces of Emperor Charles V, in order to restore the Medici to power. From the patriotic fervor that precipitated the formation of a citizen militia in defense of Florence, to the protracted sufferings of a near-starved and sickly populace, to the final, resigned capitulation of a city reduced to half its pre-independence population, the era of the last Florentine Republic (ca. 1528–30) quite clearly *was* an age of great anxiety (for a thorough recounting of events in and around the siege see Elizabeth Cropper, *Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier*, Los Angeles 1997). Framing the conference with such a premise, furthermore, turns the longstanding idea of Pontormo's eccentric "neuroticism" inside-out: the wellspring of anxiety is effectively relocated from that artist's innermost psyche to, instead, the frenetic environment in which he worked.

To open the talks, famed connoisseur Philippe Costamagna (Museé Fesch, Ajaccio) gave an address dedicated to correcting various "errata" from his catalogue raisonné, published twenty-five years ago (*Pontormo*, Paris 1994). As a focused addendum to that still-authoritative work, Costamagna's discussion was perhaps most useful to those scholars – admittedly, the majority in attendance – currently engaged in highly-specialized work on Pontormo's œuvre. For this reviewer, most compelling was his frank revelation of the contingencies involved in that essential, yet also necessarily fallible act of connoisseurial judgment. A missed chance for an in-person examination, the poor condition of a work at the moment of encounter, these are the kinds of everyday realities that disturb even a self-assured "eye" like Costamagna (see also his recent book *The Eye: An Insider's Memoir of Masterpieces, Money and the Magnetism of Art*, trans. by Frank Wynne, New York 2018).

Antonio Geremicca (Université de Liège) added another dimension to these reflections on Pontormo's style by considering its "imitation" or "emulation" in the hands of the master's pupil and close collaborator, Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572). Geremicca made a case for reassigning Bronzino's *Lady in Red With a Dog* and *St. Sebastian* from the mid 1530s to nearly a decade earlier, due to their stylistic resonance with Pontormo's works from those years. Given that a principle argument against such an earlier dating has been their dissonance with other known works of Bronzino from the 1520s – these works being more technically accomplished and "Pontormo-esque" (e. g. Craig Hugh Smyth's discussion of the Certosa lunettes in The Earliest Works of Bronzino, in: *The Art Bulletin* 31/3, 1949, 184–209) – the upshot of Geremicca's proposal is a favorable reevaluation of Bronzino's early career. Now the painter is adept enough to work selectively in two distinct "maniere," even before his breakthrough trip to Pesaro ca. 1530. However, it was slightly disappointing that Geremicca did not devote more space within his presentation to considering the possibility of master-student coordination in the production of these works. It seems both that the simultaneous presence of Pontormo's and Bronzino's literal "hands" should not be ruled out lightly, and that (if true) such a feature might bear some weight within Geremicca's discussion. At the very least, there is ample opportunity here for a meta-critique on the limitations of such authorial-stylistic pinpointing in the case of early 16th-century Pontormo-Bronzino workshop products.

Alessandro Cecchi (Casa Buonarroti, Florence) then ended the first session with a fascinating and detailed account of the events in Florence from the time of the Medici expulsion from the city in May 1527, through the siege of 1529–30. Borne of that

scholar's deep and abiding engagement with archival work, his discussion highlighted the history of military costuming in the Florentine Republic. In this sense, Cecchi performed the vital work of rehabilitating (at least in part) the elusive "period eye": against a background of military ordinances and other documentation, portraits like the Getty *Halberdier* can, once again, register as unequivocally "martial" for the modern observer. For instance, the rich and expensive textiles represented in the *Halberdier*, on first blush utterly discordant with a military context, would have been quite common in the Florentine citizen militia – indeed a point of pride for the young elites drafted to the city's defense. Though the notion of a standardized military uniform was foreign to this time, Cecchi's divulgence of the strict ordinances in place for military dress makes it clear that neither was the "abito di soldato" an arbitrary choice. Overall he made a case for viewing works like the *Halberdier* and the (in many ways similar) *Young Man in a Red Cap* as a distinct mode of portraiture that lived and died with the brief Florentine Republic. Eager to immortalize their new identity as Republican soldiers, these wealthy young men donned the weaponry and costuming appropriate to contemporary combat and were represented as such – in dynamic, three-quarters view – by one of the most famous painters in Florence. An additional point of interest, raised in the questioning which followed his talk, was the curious fact that none of the portraiture from these years in Florence (even outside Pontormo's workshop) represents figures armed with that new and much-touted weapon of war: the arquebus. Highly regarded by Machiavelli himself and known to have been used during the siege, such a representational gap is notable – even if it is not totally surprising, given that the pike and sword would be much more effective in combat than the slow-to-load gun.

THE CONFERENCE II: REVERBERATIONS OF A DEVASTATING SIEGE

Having been led through the events of the calamitous siege, the audience was treated in the following session to a closer consideration of its repercussions within Pontormo's Florence of the 1530s and 40s. In an apropos address, Cécile Beuzelin (Université de Paris, Panthéon-Sorbonne) began with an examination of a group of works – *Portrait of a Halberdier* (Pontormo, ca. 1529–30; *fig. 4*), *Pygmalion* (Bronzino, ca. 1530), *Young Man in a Red Cap* (Pontormo, ca. 1530) and *10,000 Martyrs* (Bronzino, ca. 1530) – all of which, excluding the *Martyrs*, were to be found in the Getty exhibition. Beuzelin followed the political-historical line of argumentation first expounded by Elizabeth Cropper in *Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier* (Los Angeles 1997) by tying the proliferation of Florentine-centric references within these works to the burgeoning Republican spirit of their patrons in the midst of the siege (see also Bastian Eclercy, Examples of "maniera": Perino, Pontormo, Bronzino and the "Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand", in: *Maniera: Pontormo, Bronzino and Medici Florence*, Munich 2016, 33–41). As a bonus, Beuzelin pointed out, such artistic self-referentiality also catapulted these works, their makers, and their patrons into the midst of the then-fashionable paragone debates. Beuzelin gave perhaps the most food for thought with her novel suggestion that the Bronzino *Martyrdom* was – rather than an autonomous work – originally the cover for the recently-rediscovered *Young Man in a Red Cap*. Alongside the similarly-matched pair of the *Pygmalion* and *Portrait of a Halberdier*, Beuzelin has hit upon a rich opportunity for exploring the dialectics between portraits and their narrative covers at this fraught moment in 16th-century history.

Julia Siemon (Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York) also focused on the theme of politicized content in Pontormo's and Bronzino's works, but now in the context of the immediate aftermath of the siege. Siemon zeroed in on the *Alleged Portrait of Dante* (ca. 1532) by Bronzino, wherein the figure holds a copy of Dante's *Paradise* opened to the 25th canto. While the rhetoric of that canto has previously been linked to lingering Republican sentiments in the *Alleged Portrait* (see Jonathan Nelson, Dante Portraits in Sixteenth Century Florence, in: *Gazette des beaux-arts* 6/120, 1992,

59–77). Siemon adds a specificity to this interpretation by suggesting that the reference be read against the background of Donato Giannotti's *Della repubblica fiorentina* (1531). The first edition of this text included commentary on the 25th canto as a metaphor for the Medici rise to power, and – as Siemon argues – this likely was at the forefront of staunchly-republican patron Bartolomeo Bettini's mind when he commissioned Bronzino for the work just one year later. Beyond even the immediate aftermath of the siege, Siemon's talk raised the idea of a potential longue durée of Republican sentiments – possibly well into the 16th century, although this would be a tricky and elusive topic of investigation. Also notable was her disclosure of an important archival document that confirms the long-supposed, but never definitively dated, marriage of Carlo Neroni (thought to be the sitter in *Young Man in a Red Cap*) to on March 1, 1541. Based on her theory that this is a marriage portrait (perhaps the letter Neroni clutches is a partially obscured "Martelli"?), Siemon proposed a new dating of the late 1530s or early 1540s and, moreover, a reassignment to Bronzino – disrupting, however slightly, the siege-era premise for the work as it is contextualized in *Miraculous Encounters*.

Following Siemon, Carlo Falciani of the Accademia di Belle Arti (Florence) broadly outlined the characteristics of Pontormo's "manner" from 1530 to the end of that decade – in particular highlighting the new, soft chiaroscuro technique displayed in both his paintings and drawings throughout the period. Here the roughly-chronological groupings employed by the conference organizers perhaps, to a certain extent, failed the speaker. Falciani's talk would have been better suited to – and better served by – the connoisseurial and stylistically-oriented framework of the first session. As it was, though, his reflections were a refreshing reminder of the materiality of art and the act of making, a brief transport from the paths of iconography lately traversed.

The final speaker of the day ushered in yet another invigorating change of pace. Over the last twenty years, a movement towards the interrogation of the canonical, Burckhardtian Renaissance has broadly gripped scholarship on the period. This impulse has, moreover, produced some of the most exciting and thought-provoking literature of the field to date. Previously fringe topics like the politics and processes of female patronage, the operations of artistic collaboration, and the serious study of "copies" or "replicas" have – as the paradigm of the Renaissance "genius artist" loosens its grip – begun to see the light of day. In an illuminating talk focused on the joint Michelangelo-Pontormo commission *Noli me Tangere* (ca. 1530–40), Dennis Geronimus (New York University, Dept. of Art History) touched upon each of these themes. Indeed, the *Noli Me Tangere* represents a fascinating and multivalent chapter in 16th-century art production. It was first commissioned by the devout Vittoria Colonna, designed by Michelangelo and executed by Jacopo Pontormo, then subsequently copied by a number of artists over the course of the 1500s (today it survives in six distinct iterations; see also Christian Kleinbub, To Sow the Heart: Touch, Spiritual Anatomy, and Image Theory in Michelangelo's *Noli me tangere*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 66/1, 2013, 81–129).

Like Siemon, Geronimus delved into the murky arena of the siege's aftereffects by zeroing in on the oft-overlooked political ramifications of the commission. He unveiled a shocking "snapshot" of post-siege life wherein recent embittered enemies were made to set aside political differences and, once again, work closely with one another. Only a close examination of Colonna's means of patronage revealed this circumstance: for, it was Alfonso d'Avalos, commander of the occupying imperial forces under Charles V, who acted as the requisite male intercessor between Colonna and the staunchly pro-Republican artist Michelangelo (a man who had helped to design Florence's siege-era fortifications). Geronimus did not tease out the precise implications of this bipartisan interaction (was it common for Republican proponents to be reintegrated into the fold of monarchal Florentine society, or was Michelangelo

Fig. 1 Jacopo da Pontormo, Visitation. Preparatory Drawing, ca. 1528/29. Black chalk with white heightening, quadrats in red chalk, 326 x 240 mm. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei disegni e delle stampe, inv. 461 F (Cat., p. 111)

simply a special case – too talented to hold a grudge against for long?), but rather illuminated it as an intriguing topic for further study.

THE CONFERENCE III: THE LEGACY OF PONTORMO: MODERN RECONSIDERATIONS

Day two began with a set of talks by Roberto Fedi (Università per Stranieri di Perugia) and Elizabeth Pilliod (Rutgers University), who both treated Pontormo's final, major fresco series in San Lorenzo. Fedi addressed the painter's state of mind and body during this crucial project, known to us through a rare surviving manuscript today called his "diary." Drawing on an expertise dating back to his 1996 critical edition of the diary, Fedi reviewed its various functions for Pontormo: as a complement to his work at San Lorenzo, the artist filled sixteen sheets with preparatory drawings but also personal commentary. From these musings, Pontormo's reflections on the state of his health – relayed in seemingly-neurotic specificity of detail – have since proven the most bizarre to modern eyes. These Fedi re-contextualized in relation to typical Counter Reformation conceptions of the body-as-microcosm, wherein it would not be unexpected for an artist to carefully consider the state of his own body alongside (and as an inextricable complement to) his artistic endeavors.

For her part, Elizabeth Pilliod revisited the very content of Pontormo's no-longer-extant San

Fig. 2 Pontormo, Visitation, ca. 1528/29. Oil on canvas, 207 x 159 cm. Carmignano, Pieve dei Santi Michele e Francesco (Cat., p. 107)

Lorenzo frescoes. She proposed an amendment to prior reconstructions of the fresco cycle which would, ultimately, restore their religious orthodoxy – and broadly also the "normalcy" of Pontormo's production here. In a classic case of compounded scholarly-error, it seems that the model advanced by Charles de Tolnay in his article "Les fresques de Pontormo dans le chœur de San Lorenzo à Florence" (in: *Critica d'arte*, 3. Ser., 9, 1950/1 [1951], 38–52) for the orientation of Pontormo's frescoes in San Lorenzo has not since undergone any kind of serious scrutiny. And yet, based on the evidence of surviving cartoons from the commission, de Tolnay had made the clearly contestable choice to reverse

Fig. 3 Pontormo, Portrait of a Young Man in a Red Cap, ca. 1530. Oil on canvas, 92,1 x 73 cm. Private collection (Cat., p. 131)

the figural orientation of each fresco from its representation in a contemporary print. This inversion introduced many theological inconsistencies into the cycle, perhaps the most serious being the left-handedness of Christ's blessing gesture. Drawing together a wide range of corroborating evidence, Pilliod repudiated de Tolnay's longstanding reconstruction with impressive thoroughness. Not only does the imperial, propagandistic intent behind the commission of the printed cycle render it unlikely to have been badly made in the manner proposed by de Tolnay, but a more thorough understanding of Pontormo's working practices can alleviate concern over this mismatch between his cartoons and the final frescoes. For, as Pilliod demonstrated, Pontormo routinely experimented over the course of several highly-elaborated modelli using mirror images and repositioned clay models (for more on these issues, see her upcoming monograph *Pontormo at San Lorenzo: Art, History & Ritual*, Harvey Miller Publishers, Turnhout 2019).

Quite fitting for a closing speaker, Elizabeth Cropper (CASVA, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC) then catapulted the audience firmly into the 21st century. Her address led us along the twisting pathways of her own academic journey with Pontormo – an idiosyncratic tale that, yet, enfolded moments of much broader disciplinary resonance. Particularly intriguing was Cropper's disclosure of the backlash incited by her first major publication on the artist, the beforementioned *Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier* (1997). In that work, she had reopened a controversy which lingers even today: is the sitter in the *Halberdier* a pro-Republican Francesco Guardi, painted by Pontormo during the months of the siege (à la Cropper), or is it in fact a post-1530s portrait of the young despot Cosimo de' Medici? Here the very signifying power of this multi-million dollar masterpiece is at stake: either a bleak testament to Medici totalitarian rule and the service of art to power, or an uplifting validation of Republican resistance, hinting at the potential revolutionizing capacity of painting (for a summary of the evidence

Fig. 4 Pontormo, Portrait of a Halberdier, ca. 1529/30. Oil on cloth, 95,3 x 73 cm. Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 89.PA.49 (Cat., p. 119)

Mannerist art, or a vehicle by which they are challenged – and either way, remains a telling barometer for the state of scholarship on 16th-century art.

THE CATALOGUE

Finally, accompanying the exhibition is the short but useful book titled *Miraculous Encounters: Pontormo, from Drawing to Painting* (2018), edited by Bruce Edelstein and Getty curator Davide Gasparotto. In terms of illustration, one could not wish for better: beyond even the comprehensive catalogue reproductions,

in the Guardi versus Cosimo debate, see also the catalogue entry by Gasparotto). Though of course oversimplified here for brevity, framing the issue so baldly illuminates Cropper's larger point about ongoing re-evaluations of 16th-century, so-called "Mannerist" art – not just the *Halberdier*. As attention shifts towards painting of the first third of the century, our narrative about that broader epoch likewise adjusts: oftentimes the idea of Mannerist art as a generally inferior, propagandistic, "backwater" era comes under intense scrutiny (again, see Aurenhammer), or early-phase work may be disassociated from the framework of "Mannerism" altogether. Depending on who we think the sitter is, the *Halberdier* could be a fulcrum for reifying longstanding conceptions about

the organizers have included a number of stunning, full-page and full-color detail shots of the three Pontormo paintings on display. Alongside these visual reminders of the works' materiality – brushstrokes and craquelure on full display – two of the three essays in this volume address issues of conservation and restoration in relation to Pontormo's *Visitation*. Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli's brief essay on the conservation history of the painting gives a peek into the initial, archival phase of the restoration process. Meanwhile, Daniele Rossi's paper on the *Visitation*'s 2013–14 restoration uncovers many details related to Pontormo's working process: Rossi reveals such delightful tidbits as Pontormo's use of the butt of the brush in certain areas, and that the artist at times incised

directly into the dried gesso of the painting, amongst much more.

By far the most substantial essay in the volume, though, is Bruce Edelstein's. Treating the three Pontormo paintings displayed in *Miraculous Encounters*, Edelstein attempts to "de-mystify" each on a particular front. Firstly, for the *Visitation*, he tackles three long-debated concerns: its iconography, the original patronage and destination of the work, and the reason for Vasari's odd elision of the painting in his *Lives*. Here Edelstein adopts a carefully-moderated approach, adhering closely to verifiable facts about the *Visitation* in his measured deductions. These are, on the one hand, reassuringly grounded: the unidentified figures behind Mary and Elizabeth are simply their requisite female attendants, it was probably commissioned by the Pinadori family for a Florentine, Franciscan setting (given the particular veneration of the Virgin and John the Baptist in the latter), and was likely neglected by Vasari not because of its probable pro-Republican patrons, but because he simply was unaware of its existence.

For its wealth of detail – particularly in his discussion of patronage – Edelstein's essay is an excellent resource on the *Visitation*. And quite often his observations provide food for thought on Pontormo more broadly. For example, in paralleling the composition of the *Visitation* with that of the famous, 13th-century Visitation mosaic in the vault of the Florence Bapistery, Edelstein raises the intriguing question of potential "medievalisms" within that artist's work. Perhaps a drawback to Edelstein's quite literal approach, though, is that it precludes a discussion of the nuanced effects of Pontormo's doubled figures here. While few would take the attendant figures as "actual" rotated doubles of Mary and Elizabeth, their striking resemblance could be further explored along the lines of David Summers's "figure come fratelli" (the repetition and rotation of figures both succeeds in maintaining the theologically-mandated "wholeness" of the sacred figure and demonstrating their transcendence of temporality; see Summers, "Figure Come Fratelli": A Transformation of Symmetry in Renaissance Painting, in: *Sixteenth-Century Italian Art*, ed. by Michael W. Cole, Oxford 2006, 485–510).

That author's subsequent analyses of the *Halberdier* and *Young Man in a Red Cap* touch on many of the topics visited throughout the conference, including Pontormo's painting technique and working processes, the identity of the sitters in these portraits, and the impact of the siege on these productions. Although also informative, there was a rather telling divide between Edelstein's discussion of the portrait group and his handling of the *Visitation*, connected as they were by the loose "tissue" of synchronically-produced works but not, it seems, very much else. This, in fact, mirrors a larger fissure within the proceedings of the "Painting in an Age of Anxiety" conference and the *Miraculous Encounter* exhibit itself. For, while the *Visitation* – visually, promotionally, and textually – played a starring role in the exhibit and catalogue, it was never substantively discussed during an attendant conference mostly concerned with Pontormo's portrait group.

Indeed, the overarching framework of *Miraculous Encounters*, centered on the idea of these works as products of the uncertain and devastating siege years in Florence, does lend itself more easily to a discussion of his dashing, military-style portraits. And yet – despite this slight imbalance – overall, *Miraculous Encounters* makes a focused addition to scholarship on 16th-century painting. By so pointedly countering Pontormo's "Vasarian" reputation as an eccentric loner, and bringing his works into direct conversation with the historical circumstances in which they were produced, *Miraculous Encounters* begins reintegrating him into a broader conversation about 16th-century art. One hopes that subsequent exhibitions might then continue to build on this worthy project.

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