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TITIAN 500

A symposium held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, under the auspices of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 25–27 October 1990

The symposium coincided with the opening of the Titian exhibition, a slightly modified version of the show that had previously been seen in Venice. The title was somewhat misleading, because almost half the papers were focussed on the newly restored *Feast of the Gods* by Giovanni Bellini. Although Hans Belting was expected to speak, in the event he was unable to attend, and as a result German scholars, most regrettably, were not represented among the contributors.

The papers on Titian were a rather miscellaneous selection, reflecting the present fragmented state of Titian studies. Francesco Valcanover opened the proceedings with a summary of some of the issues raised, and in part resolved, by the exhibition, particularly as a result of scientific investigation. He accepted Titian's responsibility for *Christ carrying the Cross* in the Scuola di San Rocco, and claimed that technical evidence confirmed that *Jacopo Pesaro presented to St Peter* in Antwerp was all by one hand. His proposal that this picture should be dated after 1510, because of its resemblance to the Magnani *Virgin and Child with Saints and Donor*, was difficult to test, since, most unfortunately, the Antwerp picture was displayed only in Venice and the Magnani picture only in Washington. Valcanover also argued that the San Rocco *Annunciation*, which he dated c. 1535, was largely autograph, but he pointed to extensive intervention by pupils in the Santo Spirito ceiling. A similar point was made by Giovanna Nepi Scirè, whose very interesting paper expanded on some of the material in her essay in the catalogue. As she indicated, the Santo Spirito pictures are much repainted, especially in the sky. Although *Cain and Abel* and *David and Goliath*, in particular, contain significant *pentimenti*, she convincingly suggested that the changes between Titian's drawing for *Abraham and Isaac* and the finished picture are largely due

to other hands. Even more revealing was an examination of the *Pentecost* from Santo Spirito. Ever since the publication of documents concerning this picture by Alessandra Sambo in the proceedings of the 1976 conference on *Tiziano a Venezia* it has been unclear whether this was the original picture begun by Titian in 1529 and restored by him after suffering damage from damp in the early 1540s, or an entirely new version painted around 1544–45. The absence of major *pentimenti* confirms that the second alternative is correct, since the documents indicate that in the case of the first picture Titian “aveva bozato la pala a un modo e poi se pentiva, de là dui over tre anni la bozava a un altro modo”. This was certainly the most important single discovery to emerge from the conference. Nepi Scirè also produced new information about the Frari *Assumption*, demonstrating the presence of *pentimenti* and some underdrawing. These findings were amplified by Paolo Spezzani, whose use of computer-enhanced infrared images has produced a mass of new data. The pictures which he discussed included the San Salvatore *Annunciation*, the *Presentation of the Virgin* and the *Assumption*, to name only the most important.

My own paper was concerned with the reliability of Titian's early biographers, notably Vasari and Ridolfi. I argued that all Ridolfi's statements about Titian of an anecdotal kind which cannot be corroborated by earlier sources can probably be discounted; and I also pointed out that the text of the *Meraviglie dell'Arte* published by Hadeln is by no means reliable. Regarding Vasari, it is often forgotten that the altarpiece of *San Giovanni Elemosinario* is mentioned in the first edition of the *Vite*, suggesting that it must predate Vasari's visit to Venice in 1541–42, although most scholars now date it to the late 1540s. I also proposed that it was relatively simple to distinguish between statements in the 1568 biography of Titian which came from the artist himself and interpolations made by Vasari on his own initiative. In particular, it is most unlikely that Titian told Vasari that he had painted the *Flight into Egypt* now in Leningrad, but there is good evidence, both textual and visual, that the *Raphael and Tobias* in the Accademia is a work by Titian of c. 1507–08, not a later painting by Sante Zago, as claimed by Boschini.

The perennial problem of early Titian was also addressed by Sydney Freedberg, Mauro Lucco and Arthur Steinberg. Freedberg expanded on the account of Titian's earliest paintings outlined in his contribution to the Pelican History of Art, suggesting in particular that Titian was the author of the *Allendale Nativity*. Participants in the symposium were fortunate in being able to see the picture itself, just restored, in the conservation studio. But controversy regarding the authorship of this deeply problematical work seems destined to continue. Lucco argued that in the crucial period before the death of Giorgione Sebastiano was a more innovative figure in Venice than Titian. He was certainly justified in pointing to the importance of Sebastiano's Venetian pictures, but it is open to question whether he was right to date the Kingston Lacy *Judgement of Solomon* as early as c. 1506, or whether it is correct to suppose that Titian did not paint his frescoes at the Fondaco until 1510. Steinberg, finally, expanded on the article he wrote with Jonathan Wylie in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Vol. 32, 1990, pp. 54–88), relating changes in pictorial technique introduced into Venice in the early sixteenth century to larger cultural changes in Venetian society.

Questions of attribution were also considered by Terisio Pignatti and Ugo Ruggeri. Pignatti revived the Tietzes' hypothesis that Titian's later compositions were preserved in the studio in the form of painted *ricordi*; and he proposed that one such *ricordo* is a painting of *Diana and Actaeon* now in a private collection in Lausanne. Ruggeri was the only speaker who dealt in detail with Drawings. His attribution of a study of a female nude (reproduced Wethey, *Titian and his Drawings*, Princeton 1987, pl. 63) to Romanino was wholly convincing. More controversial was the suggestion that Titian was responsible for two other drawings in private collections, a pen study of heads and a chalk study of a fallen warrior (now on the market), since neither corresponds to any figures in paintings by Titian. Ruggeri also dealt with one other drawing, a copy of the *Death of St Peter Martyr*, which he attributed to Ludovico Carracci.

On the basis of a document of 1770 implying that Titian's altarpiece from the oratory of San Nicolò della Lattuga at the Frari (now in the Vatican) dated from 1514, Peter Humfrey suggested that Titian may have obtained the commission for the *Assumption* on the strength of the progress that he had made on the San Nicolò picture, which he completed many years later. If true, this would have important implications for Titian's career in the second decade of the century. Equally interesting was Humfrey's proposal that there may have been an earlier picture at the high altar of the Frari, perhaps a Coronation of the Virgin, which of course would have been iconographically entirely appropriate to a church of Santa Maria Gloriosa.

The problem of Titian's visual sources was discussed by Robert Echols and Wendy Stedman Sheard. Echols was principally concerned with the ceiling paintings for Santo Spirito and the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, and he pointed to various parallels in the work of Correggio at Parma — which Titian would almost certainly have seen when he went to Busseto in 1543 — and in that of Giulio at Mantua. He also suggested that Titian may have been influenced by Tintoretto's ceiling paintings now in Modena. Wendy Stedman Sheard identified the sculptural models for figures in the Ferrara *Bacchanals*, and showed how the use of explicit antique borrowings was anticipated in the celebrated and slightly earlier reliefs commissioned by Alfonso d'Este from Antonio Lombardo. She also considered the iconographic significance of the Lombardo reliefs, and their thematic links with the *Bacchanals*.

Problems of iconography were also raised by three other speakers in the sessions on Titian. In a stimulating paper Augusto Gentili explored various aspects of Titian's religious imagery. In particular, he suggested that the artist may have adopted a nicodemist attitude from the 1540's onwards. Gentili detected the first signs of this in the *Ecce Homo* of 1543; and he also drew attention to the very real problem of deciding which figure was meant to be Nicodemus and which Joseph of Arimathea in Titian's various paintings of the *Entombment*. The clearest evidence of possible heterodoxy was provided by Gentili's observation that the patron of the San Salvatore *Annunciation*, Antonio Cornovi della Vecchia, was a close friend of the jeweller and poet Alessandro Caravia, whose supposed protestant sympathies were investigated by the Inquisition. Rona Goffen too provided new information about Titian's patrons, in this case about Nicolò Aurelio and his wife Laura Bagarotto, the original owners of *Sacred and Profane Love*. She used the information to propose a new reading of this controversial picture,

whose unusual imagery she interpreted as in part reflecting the very unusual circumstances of the marriage. As a contrast and corrective to the general focus on single pictures and closely circumscribed historical questions, David Rosand raised wider methodological issues, taking as his theme the problems involved in the interpretation of Titian's paintings of female nudes, such as the *Venus of Urbino* and the *Farnese Danae*.

The discussion of the *Feast of the Gods* began with two papers by the restorers, David Bull and Joyce Plesters, in which they summarised and in some respects corrected the account of the restoration published in *Studies in the History of Art*, 40, 1990. Several important conclusions have emerged from this restoration. First, it is now clear that the intermediate landscape at the left was indeed by Dosso Dossi, as had long been surmised; Dosso also repainted some areas of foliage and added a bird at the upper right. Second, it seems virtually certain that all of the figures and their attributes were painted by Bellini himself. In particular, the eagle in the centre of the composition was painted directly on the ground, so that if Bellini initially planned to show citizens of Thebes rather than gods, as Philipp Fehl proposed in *Studies in the History of Art*, 6, 1974, he must have changed his mind at a very early stage. Third, as Joyce Plesters observed, the canvas is very similar to that later used by Titian for *Bacchus and Ariadne*, suggesting that it too was supplied by Alfonso d'Este. Fourth, some changes, mostly of a not very significant kind, were made to the picture in the nineteenth century by Vincenzo Camuccini.

These discoveries leave the question of just what subject Bellini was required to paint still unresolved. David Alan Brown argued that the major changes made to the picture reflected a wish on the part of the patron to make the composition more "classical"; but he emphasised, as Fehl had done before him, that Bellini must have been aware of the woodcut of *Priapus and Lotis* which appeared both in Latin editions of the *Metamorphoses* and in Bonsignori's very free Italian paraphrase. Paul Holberton observed that there are the major discrepancies between the picture and Ovid's *Fasti*, which has often been regarded as the literary source. He argued that the picture did not illustrate any specific published text, but instead belonged to a distinctive genre of *fêtes champêtres* that emerged in Venice in the early sixteenth century as a pictorial counterpart to pastoral poetry. He also discussed other examples of the genre, such as Titian's *Three Ages of Man* and the famous picture in the Louvre. Jaynie Anderson too drew attention to the differences between Bellini's picture and the texts with which it has traditionally been associated, and referred to a nineteenth-century identification of the subject as an illustration of the famous saying of Terence, "Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus". Like Holberton, she argued that the composition is not to be understood primarily as a representation of the myth of Lotis and Priapus, but as a Feast of the Gods, the pair of figures at the right being of only incidental iconographic significance. Her paper, however, was not limited to a discussion of iconography, but included a great deal of interesting information about the activities of Vincenzo Camuccini and his brother Piero, a large part of whose collection is now at Alnwick Castle.

The two remaining papers were by Emanuele Mattaliano and Joseph Manca. Mattaliano provided a fascinating account, based on new documents, of the collection

of paintings assembled in Ferrara in the early seventeenth century by Roberto Canonici. This collection, which had a bizarre history, included Dosso's problematic *Bacchanal* in the National Gallery, London. Mattaliano also proposed that this picture originally came from the same room as the *Bacchanals* by Titian and Bellini. This suggestion raises a number of problems, not least the fact, pointed out by Joyce Plesters, that it was painted on a canvas of a wholly different type. Manca, in a wide-ranging contribution, discussed the Ferrarese precedents for the mythological ensemble commissioned by Alfonso d'Este, and emphasised the notable degree of licence, both in speech and literary production, at the Ferrarese court.

The proceedings of the conference will be published in a future volume of the *Studies in the History of Art*, to be edited by Joseph Manca.

Charles Hope

Ausstellungen

DOMENICO BECCAFUMI E IL SUO TEMPO

Malerei, Skulptur und Fresken: Chiesa di Sant'Agostino, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Dom, Palazzo Pubblico, Oratorio di San Bernardino, Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala und Palazzo Bindi Sergardi in Siena, 16. Juni bis 4. November 1990. Graphik: Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena, 16. Juni bis 16. September 1990.

Katalog gewidmet Giovanni Previtali, herausgegeben von Elemond Editori Associati und dem Comitato Promotore Mostra, erschienen im Electa Verlag, Mailand 1990, mit Beiträgen zahlreicher Autoren, 733 Seiten, zahlreiche farbige und schwarzweiße Abbildungen.

(mit sechs Abbildungen)

Ursprünglicher Anlaß dieser ersten Beccafumi-Ausstellung war wohl der 500. Geburtstag des Malers, Bronzebildners, Graphikers und Dekorateurs Domenico di Giacomo di Pace, genannt Beccafumi oder Mecarino. Als Geburtsjahr gab man bisher aufgrund der von Vasari notierten Vita des Künstlers und einer Quelle im Archiv der Sienser Domopera das Jahr 1486 an. Demnach hätte sich das Ausstellungskomitee verspätet. Es aktualisierte jedoch ganz im Gegenteil so manche Forschungsposition zu Beccafumi, sogar das Geburtsdatum. Carla Zarilli hatte im Archivio di Stato di Siena die Nachricht von der Taufe des Söhnchens Domenico des genuesischen Arbeiters Iacomo di Giovanni am 2. Oktober 1484 entdeckt. Name und Beruf dieses Iacomo decken sich mit den Angaben Vasaris zu Beccafumis Familie. Stefano Moscadelli, der diese Quelle im Anhang des Ausstellungskataloges veröffentlicht (S. 680), hält es deshalb „bei gebührender Vorsicht“ für gerechtfertigt, sie auf den Künstler zu beziehen. Domenico Beccafumi wäre demnach bereits 1484 geboren worden.

Die Ausstellung war auf sieben Orte in Siena verteilt; darüber hinaus empfahl eine Kurzbroschüre den Besuch von fünf weiteren Standorten mit Werken Beccafumis, della Pacchias und Sodomias. In der Pinakothek gab man einen chronologisch dargebotenen Überblick über das graphische Schaffen Beccafumis: Zeichnungen, Ölstudien, Radie-