

'Artisti alla Corte Granducale' at Palazzo Pitti

Author(s): Malcolm Waddingham

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to view an early fresco important in the chronology of the artist. This is the *Adoration of the Magi* (cat. No.3; here Fig.84), detached from the parish church of San Pietro in San Polo d'Enza, some twenty kilometres from Reggio Emilia. The fresco, although not signed, is dated 1540 in an inscription, and the proposed attribution to Nicolò seems thoroughly convincing to this reviewer also. The painting reveals exactly that mixture of qualities we have ascribed above to the artist: rigidity, the stereotyped rendition of stock figures such as the San Geminiano holding the model of Modena, a surer feeling for surface patterning than for spatial organization in depth. At the same time there are already passages of genuine elegance, such as the Christ Child and the head of the oldest of the three kings. The portrait of the donor is distinguished instantly from the mechanical faces of the Madonna and saints, and is consistent with the easel portraits attributed to the painter, of which the majority have been assembled for this exhibition (cat Nos.16, 17, 23, 24; more doubtfully 27).

It is instructive for our understanding of Nicolò to compare this early work with a hitherto unpublished drawing of the same subject (cat. No.55; here Fig.82) acquired in June of this year by the Louvre. As Mme Béguin writes, it seems to belong to the early period in France, when the influence of Primaticcio had already made itself felt alongside the Parmigianesque manner adopted by the painter in his last years in Italy. At least twelve years would thus have elapsed between the drawing and the San Polo d'Enza *Adoration*. The competence acquired in that time is visible in the greater nervousity, a growing sophistication in the rendering of space, elegance of setting and attitudes, and rhythmic accord between the grouping of figures, architectural forms and landscape. Yet Nicolò's artisanal economy persists. The iconography has hardly been rethought. The two groups of Magi and the Holy Family still form a V. The figure of the oldest king kissing the foot of the Christ Child is virtually the same in the drawing as in the fresco. The amusing gesture, kindly pointed out to the reviewer by Mme Béguin, of the standing king who takes off his crown by tipping his hat, repeats the same action in the fresco. Manner has changed more than matter.

More remarkable in every respect than the San Polo d'Enza *Adoration* are the frescoes from the Palazzo Torfanini in Bologna (cat. Nos. 18, 19, 20, 21; cat. Figs.IV, V; here Fig.85) whose rescue and restoration were the motivating factors

behind the exhibition. Our criticism of the hanging of detached frescoes does not extend to this decoration for happily their original disposition has been preserved, and only their unfortunate state of dilapidation prevents us from studying them as a narrative as well as a decorative ensemble. Exceptional in form, differing, as noted in the catalogue, from the norms of Bolognese mural decoration, they are exceptional also in being among the first paintings (c.1548–1550) to illustrate Ariosto. Their cleaning has revealed them to be of great colouristic charm. The room when new must have been a delightful expression of that revival of chivalric courtly culture in Northern Italy, in the sixteenth century already permeated with irony, which Ariosto's poem virtually embodies.

Besides bringing to view important works now restored, the exhibition derives its greatest strength from the large number of drawings assembled. Nearly forty of these have been selected and hung with intelligence and sensitivity. Juxtapositions of drawings from the same period vividly illustrate Nicolò's variations of style, as for example cat. Nos.40, 47, 50, all related to Bolognese projects, and datable to the years 1550–52.

In general, the exhibition in conjunction with the Palazzo Poggi frescoes makes available, in the original or in photographs, examples of all the types of projects in which Nicolò is known to have been active. No assessment of this artist's role can dispense with a careful study of it, and in particular of its exemplary catalogue, translated and bibliographically annotated by Wanda Bergamini. The catalogue is equipped with a comprehensive bibliography in chronological order.

It is hoped that the pioneer work done here attracts more scholars to this engaging provincial Modenese artist, who by the end of his life in 1571 had become *premier peintre de France*.

ERIKA H. LANGMUIR

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The title of this exhibition (May–July 1969) can be interpreted in a number of ways, but Dr Marco Chiarini, who was responsible for its organization, defined its scope in the introduction to his catalogue. Summed up briefly it concerned Grand-ducal patronage of non-Florentine artists in Florence during the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries. The unusual theme was also a useful pretext for introducing some of the results of recent research into neglected areas of the dispersed Medicean collec-

tions. While the exhibition was often disappointing from an aesthetic point of view, some of the finds were indisputably significant for seicento and early settecento studies.

It began with the Grand Duke Ferdinando I's patronage of Agostino Tassi, who left Rome for Tuscany soon after 1595 and stayed there until about 1609. It is only recently that Tassi's activity as an easel painter has received attention and the discovery of a number of his works in the Florentine reserve collections has helped to broaden our view of his personality. Even so his complex development still requires clarification. In the present exhibition Chiarini has revised the views he expressed in his 1967 catalogue regarding the chronology of the landscapes Nos.7, 8, and 18, which he then assigned to Tassi's Tuscan years,¹ but still maintains that No.5, in spite of its sophisticated assimilation of Elsheimer's mature landscape style (a difficult achievement in Florence before 1609) issued from this early period. It would not be worth querying this minor point were it not, in my view, part of a tendency to antedate many of these works. By anticipating a whole group of landscapes by several years (above all Nos.8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14, all dated between 1615–17) Tassi is turned into a direct precursor of Breenbergh and Poelenburgh, neither of whom arrived in Italy before 1617. This is of course permissible when there is some kind of proof – or convincing stylistic analogies are brought – to support the supposition. At the present stage of studies it is perhaps a little premature.

It seems to me safer to believe, until proof to the contrary appears, that these works were produced at least contemporaneously with the pastoral creations of Poelenburgh and Breenbergh of the early twenties, and that the *Picnic* and *Country Dance* (13 and 14) may have been conceived as late as 1625–28. For, apart from other considerations, the tonal and compositional complexities of this group – well in advance of those in Bril's 1617 *Landscape with Christ at Emmaus* (Louvre) – were the kind of solutions that Claude, Tassi's pupil from 1620 on, was to acquire and eventually project in his 1629 landscape in Philadelphia.

While on the subject of this master/pupil relationship, the *Mountain Landscape* (Fig.87) (12), catalogued as Tassi, was especially intriguing. I frequently returned to this small panel to admire the grand structure of the hills and the exquisite sensibility with which the artist

¹ Nos. 6, 7, and 8 in the exhibition catalogue, 'Paesisti, Bamboccianti, e Vedutisti nella Roma Seicentesca', Palazzo Pitti, Florence [1967].



86. *Landscape with Ruins*, by Filippo Napolitano. Canvas, 78 by 102.5 cm. (Florentine State Museums.)



87. *Mountain Landscape*, by Agostino Tassi. Copper, 31 by 39 cm. (Florentine State Museums.)

traced the thread-like paths across the slopes to the summits where the luminous sky is described with comparable subtlety. Dare one go so far as to claim this for Claude? Perhaps not. But clearly Tassi has gone beyond himself and encroached on the vision of his pupil.

Undoubtedly among the most interesting discoveries, inasmuch as they revealed a new side of Tassi as a history painter, were the *Calvary* (16), with its heroically intoned and severe landscape, and the *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* (17). Chiarini seems to me justified in returning them to Tassi and his comments on Callot's drawings after them open up a fascinating field of inquiry. The decision to give the *Calvary* to Tassi, which was believed to be by Filippo Napoletano as early as 1687, cannot have been an easy one to make; for it might have appeared more feasible for Callot to have copied a painting by Filippo, especially in view of their close friendship in Florence (1618–21) and the knowledge that Callot had already made use of one of his drawings (cf. Vitzthum, 1968).² But stylistically both the *Martyrdom* and *Calvary* fit in reasonably well with Tassi's *œuvre*.

Another surprise of this exhibition was the unexpected aspect it revealed of Filippo Napoletano's art, that is, if the paintings attributed to him here are really his; and it would seem that they are. The cornerstone of this new group is the *Water Mill* (24) which is described in a 1666 Guardaroba inventory. In his brilliant attempt to recuperate the personality and works of this elusive figure, Longhi was the first to bring notice to this Medicean entry, but at the time of his writing it was impossible to locate the picture. Now that it has come to light it is not quite what one anticipated. With its flat Bruegelian sky, neat buildings, and incised detail, it looks at first glance more Netherlandish than Italian. One might describe it as a kind of Thomas Wyck *avant la lettre*.

With this as a yardstick, and taking into account its Tassian characteristics, Chiarini has also attributed a *Tempest* (25) to him.³ That Filippo did such

subjects, and an almost identical one, is confirmed from a description of a seapiece discovered by Longhi in a 1631 Barberini inventory. What both these works have in common is a certain dry, flat quality. In the *Tempest* this shows as much in the airless billow of the sail as in the frozen mobility of the waves. In the *Water Mill* there is light but it is somehow sunless, and the linen below the window flares with the same crisp, abstract angularity as the torn sails in the storm.

From these two paintings it was but a short step to the set of four views, comprising three landscapes and a coastal scene. Like Tassi, Filippo was obviously familiar with Bril's art, and this is reflected in the *Landscape with Ruins* (Fig.86) (27). Indeed, a strong Flemish strain is again noticeable in this series, and in the *Snow scene* (26) Filippo appears in the guise of an Italian Joos de Momper, though there is none of the Flemish pleasure in handling paint for its own sake.⁴ In the remaining *Coastal scene* (29) and *Cascade* (28) Filippo comes disconcertingly close to Tassi. But what is perhaps more troubling is the difficulty of reconciling these newly discovered views with the integral group of Elsheimerian paintings proposed by Longhi for this artist, and the catalogue made no mention of this problem.

After this stimulating beginning, the exhibition tended to sag in the middle. If one were to judge the Grand Duke Ferdinando II's enlightened patronage from some of the paintings here, his reputation as a Maecenas would inevitably suffer. Unfortunately, Pietro da Cortona's unique *Self portrait* (43) was too damaged to be enjoyable, and the only picture which began to compare with his best work was the *Death of St Mary of Egypt* (44), remarkable for the rich grey handling of her body which contrasts significantly with the golden tones of the *putti*, symbols of a serene redemption.

As for Salvator Rosa, in view of such splendid masterpieces hanging in the nearby rooms of the permanent collection, it was surely a mistake to show the pair of river scenes (48 and 49) which are more likely to be by the poet and dilettante painter, Abate Antonio Lanci, to whom

they were apparently attributed in the nineteenth century, than Rosa. Nor can I accept No.50 with its coarse clouds and feeble boats. Much more impressive, once one could get in a position to see them, were the two powerful battle-pieces (62 and 63) by Jacques Courtois with their majestic and vibrant hilly landscapes behind the engaged armies. They made one realize how fine a landscapist he could be and justified Mattia de' Medici's and Ferdinando's enthusiasm for his talent.

Just as in the earlier sections of the exhibition one missed Artemesia Gentileschi, so at this point it was a pity not to have included something by Dughet, especially since, according to Baldinucci, he was in Florence at the same time as Pietro da Cortona.

Whereas Ferdinando II had been genial enough to commission Pietro da Cortona to decorate the Palazzo Pitti rooms, it was a Corsini who called Luca Giordano to Florence. Before this, however, Giordano had sent his self-portrait (78) to Cosimo III and this happily was included in the exhibition. It is a masterly work, contained yet energetic, proud in the Spanish manner, with a touch of the great Venetians and Velasquez. How unprepossessing is the red faced, Bombelli-like *Self portrait* (93) of Cassana in comparison. The only other Giordano which stood out from the rest was the virtually unknown *Christ and Veronica* (82), the sort of work that undoubtedly appealed to those late Florentine baroque artists like Gabbiani and Alessandro Gherardini.

Of those artists who came to Florence at this time, only a few settled there for good, among them Pandolfo Reschi and Crescenzo Onofri. Partly because they exchanged the potentialities of a cosmopolitan clientele in Rome for a more restricted patronage, their work never reached a wide public. It was an excellent occasion to study more closely some aspects of their work as a prelude to that crucial turning-point in art, when Florence became for a brief moment at the beginning of the eighteenth century – the catalyst was the Grand Prince Ferdinando's enlightened patronage of Sebastian and Marco Ricci, Magnasco, and Crespi – one of the springboards of the rococo style.

Of German origin, Reschi came to Florence from Rome where he evidently studied the works of Rosa, Dughet, and Courtois. In his case the artistic climate of Florence appears to have suited his whimsical spirit. Free of the stranglehold that conformist Roman patronage could exert on a young artist, Reschi, while remaining indebted to Rosa and Courtois,

² *L'Oeil*, No.159 [March 1968], pp.25–27.

³ In his catalogue entry (25) for this *Tempest*, Chiarini acknowledges Tassi's importance for this genre, but says that he knows of no such works by Tassi. A typical example of Tassi's ability in this field was published, however, by G. BRIGANTI in his essay, 'La Decorazione Pittorica della Palazzina Montalto', which was included in the volume, *La Villa Lante di Bagnaia*, Rome [1961]. Resembling this is a *Boats in a Storm* (Anonymous Collection, Rome). See the photograph, Gab.Fot.Naz. F. 16408. Surely by Tassi too is the *Ships Wrecked in a Storm* (Gallerie e Musei di Firenze: now deposited at the Palazzo Montecitorio, Rome, Inv. 1023;

photo. G.F.N. E.65726). This is closely related to the *Naval Battle*, published in *Paragone* 147, Fig. 8. Probably by Tassi, too, is the *Shipwreck* in the Galleria Nazionale, Rome, attributed to an anonymous eighteenth-century hand (G.F.N. E.61495).

⁴ In the light of this group, it seems probable that a *River Landscape with Buildings* attributed to an anonymous Flemish artist (Palazzo Montecitorio, Rome, but from Capodimonte, Naples, Inv. No. 667), is also by Filippo Napoletano (see G.F.N. E.65425).

was able to give full rein to flights of sparkling fantasy as in the *Assault on a Convent* and *The Vision of St John* (91 and 92). Before such paintings where the landscape forms, free of classical restraint, crumble and swirl around violent and supernatural incidents, we already feel on the threshold of the Rococo and close to Marco Ricci, who may well have known his work

Little interest has been taken in Onofri until recently, and then only in his Roman period which ended about 1689.⁵ A pupil of Dughet, he pursued and developed his master's themes in charming pastoral gouaches like those in the Salone del Pussino of the Palazzo Doria, Rome. Chiarini's discovery of a number of documented works (99–112 *bis*), which were originally carried out for Ferdinando's various residences, gave a clear idea of his Florentine output (c.1689–after 1712). They are a logical extension of his Roman style, but disappointing in that Onofri has exchanged his earlier gay pastel colours for a range of warm, humid browns. In some the brushwork is coarse and they exude a ponderous and oppressive atmosphere. It is only when he collaborates with Magnasco that his art assumes a more dramatic vitality and structure (104).

Whereas the collaboration of Onofri and Magnasco appeared straightforward, a more controversial subject was Magnasco's relation to Peruzzini. Although Peruzzini's name occurs in eighteenth-century sources, frequently linked with Magnasco, nothing certain was known of this Ancona artist until Arslan (1959) discovered in the Milanese collection of Dr Pietro Porro a documented *Temptation of St Anthony* with figures by Sebastiano Ricci and landscape by Peruzzini.⁶ Arslan suspected that this joint effort took place c.1706–7 when Ricci was in Florence. It was a shrewd intuition, since at that time no evidence of a Tuscan sojourn for Peruzzini had been noted. Then thanks to Mina Gregori (*Paragone* 169), attention was brought to the published letters of Lorenzo Magalotti which confirmed Peruzzini's presence in Leghorn and Florence in 1703, as well as his collaboration with Magnasco in works for the Court. With this in mind, and supported by references in the Medicean

inventories to paintings of this nature, Chiarini has attributed six landscapes to him, two of them with figures by Magnasco.

However, I was not totally convinced of Peruzzini's share in any of the paintings proposed for him, and can only explain my reservations in terms of the following remarks. There are two identical versions of the *Preaching of John the Baptist and Monks at Prayer*. By far the best pair are Nos.117 and 118. While the figures certainly appear to be Magnasco's, the landscape is problematic. The rich palette of this part, though Magnasco-esque, is distinctly Venetianized and redolent of Marco Ricci, who as we know, figured with Magnasco and others in the famous *Hermits in a Landscape* (formerly in the Della Gherardesca Collection). The second versions (115 and 116) are no more than vulgar replicas of the first two and surely by a copyist. This same hand is also responsible for the *St Francis in Ecstasy* and *St Jerome* (113 and 114), and it is worth remembering that Geiger (1923) claimed to have seen the originals of these in a private collection at Verona. Thus, taking the Porro picture as a criterion, I find it difficult to identify Peruzzini either with the landscapist of the best pair or with the copyist of the other four.

To make matters more complicated, a further pair of canvases with similar subjects, *St Francis Contemplating a Skull* and *St Francis in Ecstasy* (122 and 123), which are exhibited as by Magnasco on his own, are, according to the catalogue, described as by Magnasco and Peruzzini in a 1713 inventory; that is, soon after they were executed. Inventories are never infallible; on the other hand it would seem more reasonable to have entered and exhibited them with their traditional names, especially since the landscape parts had much in common with the Porro picture.

The important thing, however, is that the exhibition has served to bring into relief the intricacy of the problems involved. The final solutions must await further discoveries of documented paintings. The most likely place for them to be found is among the Grand-ducal collections, and Chiarini will doubtless come up with a more satisfactory answer.

From some of these observations it might be thought that this exhibition only contained material of an exclusively philological and specialist nature. This would be an unfair judgment, especially on many of those works which reflected Ferdinando's progressive taste. One has only to think, for example, of Sebastiano Ricci's powerful and sombre 1704

Crucifixion (125) – an interesting foil to his later spirited sketches for the Marucelli frescoes (128 and 129), and a reminder of the extent to which Ricci's Florentine experiences (Giordano, Cortona, and Volterrano) helped to orient his art towards a precociously rococo idiom. Nor can one forget the lovely, almost Rembrandtian self-portrait by Crespi (135), or the chiaroscuro and melancholy beauty of his 1709 *Fiera del Poggio a Caiano* (140), a felicitous addition and climax to a collection of Italian rural scenes which began with the *Country Ball* and *Picnic* by Tassi.

MALCOLM WADDINGHAM

Sacred and Profane in Turin

'Il Sacro e il Profano nell'Arte dei Simbolisti' – this was the title of an exhibition held during July and August in the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin. (There is a well-produced catalogue by Luigi Carluccio, fully illustrated but with a meagre text.) Here was a splendid idea: to group together pictures, drawings, engravings by the *other*, the seamy, side of nineteenth-century art, a melancholy art of yearning for unattainable ideals, the Cavalier in the deserted landscape searching for a bride, the dream that never became real life, illness, Salome, the resuscitation of medieval legends – in a word, the Romantic Agony which survived the Romantic Movement to reach its last gasp in the young Kandinsky and Kupka, shifting uncontrollably with the years. Those who failed to get to Turin will naturally assume it was organized on the following lines. Careful thought, they will imagine, would first have been given to what was meant by the three words symbolism, sacred, profane; lists would first have been drawn up, not of desirable works of art, but of pregnant themes circulating around Europe between Chassériau and Munch, between Blake and Klimt – a limited number of themes, all well defined, because otherwise the range of choice would have got out of hand; someone would imaginatively suggest there could be a section in honour of Des Esseintes, and attempt to reconstruct as far as possible his collection, isolated in some mauve, tortoise-infested room; another section, also screened off, would be devoted to the theme of death and decay; a third, again self-contained, devoted to evocations of Dante; a fourth, to Shakespeare; a fifth to unrequited love, and so forth. National frontiers would be abolished, so that Böcklin could stand shoulder to shoulder with Madox Brown, Moreau, Redon; Watts, Segantini, Beardsley would be reunited in the common world they purveyed. The exhibi-

⁵ See ILARIA TOESCA: 'G.B. Crescenzi, Crescenzo Onofri (e anche Dughet, Claude e G.B. Muti)', *Paragone* [May 1960], and F. ARCANGELI in the catalogue of the exhibition, 'L'Ideale Classico del Seicento in Italia', Bologna [1962], p.265. Cf. too M. WADDINGHAM: 'The Dughet Problem', *Paragone* [May 1963].

⁶ *Studies in The History of Art Dedicated to William E. Suida on his Eightieth Birthday*, Phaidon Press [1959], pp.304–311.