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Painters of Reality. Cremona and New York

Review by: Bram De Klerck

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65. *Tanzerin*, by Hans Arp. 1925. Painted wood, 146.5 by 109 cm. (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; exh. Kunstmuseum Basel).

in Schwitters's work are or could be navels? As with other such elements in his collages, the significance of such inclusions is richly indeterminable, and references to Arp in Schwitters's *œuvre* seem to operate less as overt indicators of influence than as signs of friendship or sly artistic commentary. This appears to be the case even in Schwitters's late sculptures, several of which closely echo works by Arp but replace their graceful ease with an almost parodic awkwardness.

The elegantly accomplished, seemingly inevitable forms of much of Arp's sculpture can make Schwitters's assembled work appear tatty and heavy-handed by comparison, but the sheer materiality of *Merz* also highlights unexpected aspects of Arp's work. The basic respect Schwitters had for the integrity of the picture plane as the foundation of his work's collaged accretions points up the frequency with which Arp delighted in puncturing it. His reliefs feature gaps and holes that subvert their compositional integrity (Fig.65), and even when the picture plane is not actually violated, it is rendered arbitrary by repeated patterning or ignored altogether, as in *Dada relief* (1916; no.7). Similarly, Schwitters's collages provide an interesting context for Arp's *papiers déchirés*, collages made from ripped-up pieces of his own collages and drawings, as well as paintings from the early 1940s made on crumpled paper (nos.46, 47, 57, 58, 60, 62, 63, 65 and 67). Given their active surfaces and the rough contours of the collages' torn edges, one cannot help wondering whether Arp might here have taken inspiration from Schwitters's creative use of discarded materials.

If the Kunstmuseum's project benefits Arp somewhat more than Schwitters, it is not only by its presentation of him as the senior partner in their friendship. Strangely, much of Arp's *œuvre* has never been subjected to the same degree of critical enquiry as his peers. In contrast to a continuing flurry of activity around Schwitters – the production of a multi-volume catalogue raisonné as well as numerous exhibitions and scholarly publications – a relative quiet has settled around Arp, as if there were nothing more to say about him. The catalogue's contributors aptly prove otherwise, but the strongest proof lies in the Kunstmuseum's presentation of Arp's works themselves, engaged as it were in a lively series of conversations with a good friend.

¹ Catalogue: *Kurt Schwitters: Merz – a Total Vision of the World*. Edited by Annja Müller-Alsbach and Heinz Stahlhut, with contributions by Guido Magnaguagno, Iris Bruderer-Oswald, Karin Orchard, Peter Bissegger, Eric Hattan, Beat Wyss, Jakob Kolding, Daniel Spoerri, Christoph Bignens, Kurt Schwitters, Konrad Klapheck, Ralf Burmeister, Klaus Staack, Thomas Hirshhorn, Christian Janecke, Jean Tinguely, Juri Steiner and Karl Gerstner. 264 pp. incl. 157 col. pls. + 77 b. & w. ills. (Museum Tinguely, Basel, and Benteli Publishers, Bern, 2004), Sw.F.59. ISBN 3-7165-1350-4.

² Catalogue: *Schwitters Arp*. Edited by Hartwig Fischer and Sandra Gianfreda, with contributions by Gottfried Boehm, Hubert Damisch, Götz-Lothar Darsow, Isabelle Ewig, Hartwig Fischer, Sandra Gianfreda, Bruno Haas, Isabel Schulz, and Gwendolyn Webster. 265 pp. incl. 168 col. pls. + 13 b. & w. ills. (Kunstmuseum Basel, and Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2004), Sw.F.60. ISBN 3-7204-0152-9. Available in German only.

³ H. Fischer: 'Gegenliebe. Schwitters und Arp', in *ibid.*, p.51.

Painters of reality

Cremona and New York

by BRAM DE KLERCK

Open University of the Netherlands, and Leiden University

A SMALL ALTARPIECE, painted by Lorenzo Lotto around 1523 for the church of SS. Trinità in Bergamo, depicts the Holy Trinity in an unusual way (cat. p.134). Above a landscape, Christ stands on a double rainbow, the dove of the Holy Spirit over his head, while God the Father is represented by a vague cloudy outline against a brilliant yellow background. Lotto clearly took the Old Testament prohibition on making images of God to heart. Oddly enough, this painting, supremely supernatural in effect, is included in the exhibition *Painters of Reality*, seen by this reviewer at the Museo Civico Ala Ponzone, Cremona, and currently at the **Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York** (to 15th August).¹ However, the detailed depiction of the nude figure of Christ and of the landscape, with its trees, small buildings and mountainous view, is the result of Lotto's meticulous study of visible reality and his particularly direct manner of transferring it to canvas. It is precisely this kind of keen observation and depiction of the world that was already recognised in Lombard painting, even if it was not always highly appreciated, by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theorists such as Vasari, Ridolfi and Agucchi.

The exhibition in Cremona and the slightly different version in New York present about 110 paintings and drawings by masters active in the leading artistic centres of Milan, Brescia, Bergamo and Cremona from the early years of the sixteenth century until the first half of the eighteenth. Starting with Vincenzo Foppa's altarpiece of the *Adoration of Christ* (S. Maria Assunta in Chiesanuova, Brescia; p.70), chosen for its 'domestic intimacy' and 'sense of everyday life', the exhibition moves on to cinquecento portraiture by such brilliant practitioners as Giovanni Battista Moroni and Moretto (Fig.66), includes religious works by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists such as Lotto and Tanzio da Varallo, and brings together drawings by, among others, Leonardo da Vinci and Sofonisba Anguissola. Fede Galizia and Panfilo Nuvoletto's still lifes of fruit lead on to Evaristo Baschenis's beautiful paintings of musical instruments. Genre painting is represented by Annibale Carracci's *Two children teasing a cat* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; p.240),² two or three works by Caravaggio (the *Cardsharps* from Fort Worth being shown only in New York), a handful of paintings of social outcasts by Giacomo Ceruti, as well as his lovely *Girls' school* (Fig.67). Ceruti's works, together with a series of portraits from the 1730s by Vittore Ghislandi, called Fra' Galgario, take the exhibition well into the eighteenth century.

The peculiar interest in naturalistic effects and in scenes taken from everyday life so characteristic of Lombard painting has attracted

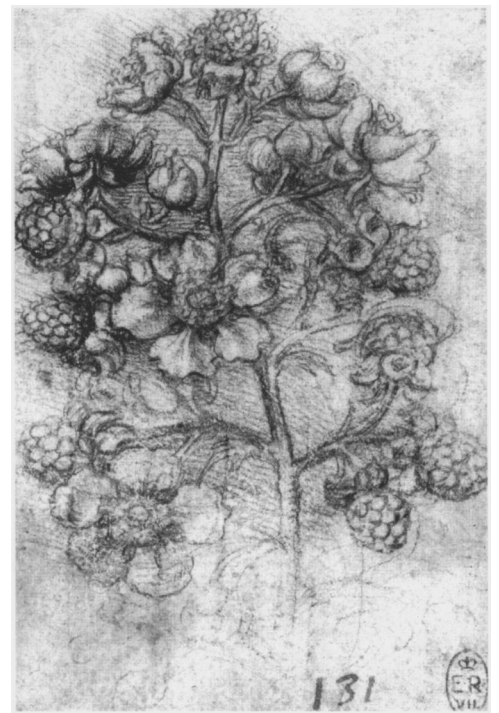


66. *Portrait of a man (?Count Fortunato Martinengo Cesaresco)*, by Moretto da Brescia. c.1542. 114 by 94.4 cm. (National Gallery, London; exh. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

much interest in the past few years, as this show and its accompanying catalogue demonstrate,³ but the theme is much older. The exhibition *I pittori della realtà in Lombardia*, held in Milan in 1953, had Roberto Longhi as its chief instigator and the author of the catalogue essay.⁴ As the exhibition under review uses almost exactly the same title, we should ask ourselves to what extent this homage to Longhi follows his lead, and how much it takes into account recent developments in scholarship in the field of north Italian painting.

In the 1920s and 1930s Longhi published a series of articles on artists he dubbed 'pre-caravaggisti' in the belief that their work, produced in and around the painter's native Milan, helped develop Caravaggio's realism and striking use of chiaroscuro. In Brescia and Bergamo in particular, western outposts of the Venetian Republic, he found these characteristics in such artists as Foppa, Moretto and Lotto; but equally important were the brothers Antonio and Vincenzo Campi of Cremona, when Caravaggio, active in Milan in the years after 1584, worked in the studio of Simone Peterzano. Following Longhi, such works as Giovan Paolo Lomazzo's *Self-portrait as abbot of the Accademia della Val di Blenio* (Brera, Milan; p.212), and in particular Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo's magnificent *St Matthew and the angel* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; p.157), have been presented time and again as no more than the fertile humus from which Caravaggio's art grew.⁵

In the present exhibition this view is still closely followed, although new directions can also be discerned. One important development is the focus on the cinquecento, and the inclusion of many religious works, whereas in 1953 Longhi almost exclusively selected portraits, still lifes and genre paintings mostly dating from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Another new trend is the emphasis on the contribution Leonardo da Vinci made to Lombard realism during his years in Milan. Martin Kemp applies the term 'hyper-naturalism' to Leonardo's meticulously observed, almost botanical drawings of plants (Fig.68), made in preparation for his



68. *Spray of blackberries*, by Leonardo da Vinci. c.1506-08. Red chalk on paper, 18.8 by 16.5 cm. (Royal Collection, Windsor; exh. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

painting of *Leda and the swan*, now lost. And Mina Gregori regards Leonardo's manner of studying facial expressions and creating luminous effects, taken up by his Lombard followers, as his further contributions to north Italian naturalism, ultimately leading to Caravaggio's innovations. Whereas Longhi stressed the importance of those artists whom he considered to be typically Lombard, by which he meant painters who had freed themselves from Venetian influences, this exhibition includes works by painters Longhi had rejected from this category such as Gerolamo Romazzino from Brescia and Andrea Previtali from Bergamo.

The fact that Longhi remains a crucial point of reference for many contributions to the catalogue, whether his arguments are accepted or rejected, illustrates the profound impact his views still have on the study of Lombard painting. In general, it is his philological, stylistic approach that has been taken over without much debate. Attempts to reveal something of the purpose and significance of Lombard naturalism are sometimes alluded to, but disappointingly almost never seriously discussed. What, for example, are the devotional implications of the brutal verism in the exposed body of Christ being crucified in paintings by Callisto Piazza (c.1535-38; S. Maria Inconronata, Lodi; p.169) or Vincenzo Campi (1577; Certosa, Pavia; p.208)? And how are we to interpret the obvious parallels with northern European art in Savoldo's *Crucifixion* (c.1515; Maison d'Art, Monte Carlo; p.148), with its Flemish-inspired landscape and borrowings from prints by Dürer and Cranach? A systematic approach to questions of this kind, which has been attempted in several monographic studies in the past few



67. *Women making lace ('The girls' school')*, by Giacomo Ceruti. 1720s. 150 by 200 cm. (Private collection, Brescia; exh. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

decades,⁶ would have added an extra dimension to the interpretation of naturalistic tendencies in north Italian painting, and to this admirably selected exhibition.

¹ Catalogue: *Pittori della realtà. Le ragioni di una rivoluzione. Da Foppa e Leonardo a Caravaggio e Ceruti*. Edited by Mina Gregori and Andrea Bayer, with essays by Andrea Bayer, Mina Gregori, Linda Wolk-Simon, Martin Kemp, Giulio Bora and Enrico De Pascale. 342 pp. incl. 133 col. pls. + 79 b. & w. ills. (Electa, Milan, 2004), €45. ISBN 8-8370-2743-5. English edition: *Painters of reality: the legacy of Leonardo and Caravaggio in Lombardy*. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2004), £40. ISBN 0-300-10275-5.

² It is curious that, with regard to Carracci, no mention is made of A.W.A. Boschloo: *Annibale Carracci in Bologna; visible reality after the council of Trent*, The Hague 1974.

³ See D.A. Brown, ed.: exh. cat. *Lorenzo Lotto, rediscovered master of the renaissance*, Washington (National Gallery of Art) 1997; F. Porzio, ed.: exh. cat. *Da Caravaggio a Ceruti; la scena di genere e l'immagine dei pitocchi nella pittura italiana*, Brescia (Museo di S. Giulia) 1998; F. Caroli, ed.: exh. cat. *Il Cinquecento lombardo; da Leonardo a Caravaggio*, Milan (Palazzo Reale) 2000; F. Paliaga, ed.: exh. cat. *Vincenzo Campi; scene del quotidiano*, Cremona (Museo Civico) 2000; M. Bona Castellotti, ed.: exh. cat. *Tanzio da Varallo; realismo, fervore e contemplazione in un pittore del Seicento*, Milan (Palazzo Reale) 2000.

⁴ R. Longhi et al., eds.: exh. cat. *I pittori della realtà in Lombardia*, Milan (Palazzo Reale) 1953.

⁵ See, for example, J.P. O'Neill, ed.: exh. cat. *The Age of Caravaggio*, New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) 1985, nos. 5 and 13; C. Strinati and R. Vodret, eds.: exh. cat. *Caravaggio; la luce nella pittura lombarda*, Bergamo (Accademia Carrara) 2000, no. 7.

⁶ See, for example, V. Guazzoni: *Moretto, il tema sacro*, Brescia 1981; *idem*: 'Pittori della realtà ed esperienza del sacro', in *La Lombardia spagnola*, Milan 1984, pp. 153-96; A. Gentili: *I giardini di contemplazione; Lorenzo Lotto 1503-1512*, Rome 1985; B. Aikema: 'Savoldo, la città di Dio e il pellegrinaggio della vita', *Venezia Cinquecento 3* (1993), pp. 191-203; and B. de Klerck: *The brothers Campi; immagini e devozione; religious painting in sixteenth-century Lombardy*, Amsterdam 1999.

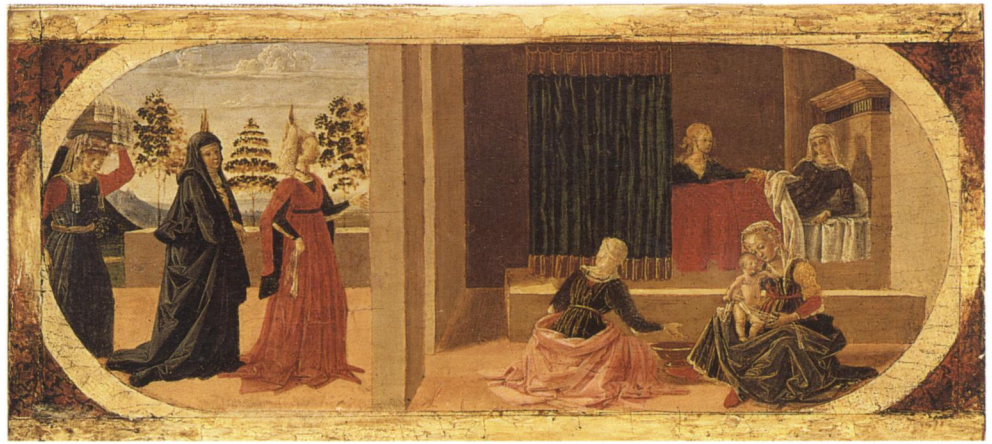
Perugino

Perugia

by MICHAEL BURY

University of Edinburgh

THE EXHIBITION *Perugino: il divin pittore* at the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia (to 18th July), is a very welcome event. Apart from the principal show, there are interesting subsidiary exhibitions at the Rocca Paolina devoted to aspects of the *Nachleben*, and in the monastery of S. Pietro on miniature painting.¹ Although the main exhibition has some wonderful things in it, unfortunately it is flawed. It is evident from the essays in the catalogue,² and even from some of the individual entries, that many more items were expected than actually arrived. In particular, many of the drawings are missing and photographs are shown instead, which is not at all satisfactory. It seems that political pressures within the Umbrian region may have played a destructive role in what was intended to have been a much more ambitious project.



69. *Birth of the Virgin (or the Baptist?)*, by Pietro Perugino. Panel, 17.7 by 41 cm. (The Walker, Liverpool, exh. Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia).

In recent years there has been a gradual revival of interest in this important painter from Città della Pieve: Pietro Scarpellini's monograph of 1984, the exhibition curated by J. Antenucci Becherer in 1997, and Vittorio Garibaldi's monograph of the same year, have added to our knowledge, but much remains to be clarified.³ The problems are immense. We do not know when he was born; although he was said to have been of the same age as Leonardo, this need not mean anything very precise. In 1472 he was inscribed in the Florentine Compagnia di S. Luca as a *dipintore*, but this date simply means that by that year he was paying dues to the Compagnia and it is thus a *terminus ante quem* for his having finished his apprenticeship and for his arrival in Florence, both of which could have occurred considerably earlier (or not). According to Vasari, he first trained with a minor Perugian painter and then moved to Florence where he entered the workshop of Verrocchio; but neither proposition can be supported by any contemporary documentary evidence. In his mature work, pressed for time as a consequence of his own success, he made very considerable use of assistants and collaborators.

A problem that has especially exercised the curators of this exhibition is how to understand the artist's emergence and very early career. Unfortunately, few of the paintings that are candidates for early works by the master, scattered through the museums of the world, are actually shown. However, the juxtaposition of the predella of the *Birth of the Virgin* (or the Baptist?; Fig. 69) from the Walker, Liverpool, with the S. Bernardino panels of 1473 (cat. no. I.9) convincingly demonstrates that the figures in one of them – the *Miracle of the young girl* (Fig. 70) – were by the same hand. The fine quality and the transparency of light give strong support to the idea that both were conceived and painted by Perugino. The eight S. Bernardino panels were a collaborative venture and many were painted by people of much lesser skill. However, there was clearly a guiding intelligence behind the whole scheme, and the likelihood that this was Perugino's is suggested by the way that the architectural structure of the *Healing of the child born dead* (no. I.9f) was

re-used in his later Ranieri *Annunciation* (no. I.33). Perugino often redeployed his own inventions, but not, as far as we know, those of others.

Was Vasari correct in supposing that Perugino was for a time in Verrocchio's workshop? The S. Bernardino panels do, to a limited extent, reveal Verrocchio's influence, especially in the angular structures of the draperies, but the impact of Pollaiuolo's ideas is far more prominent. The panels take up the narrative methods employed in the embroideries for the Baptistery vestments (*Il Paramento di S. Giovanni*) designed by Pollaiuolo from about 1466: using figures seen from the back to frame a space within which the scene takes place; giving figures rather large hands whose open-fingered gestures elaborate their emotional response to the events; the wearing of exotic head gear. The decorative vocabulary, such as the jewels that define the borders of all the S. Bernardino panels, relates to that seen in the Pollaiuolos' *St James* altarpiece for



70. *Miracle of the young girl*, by Pietro Perugino. 1473. Tempera on panel, 78.5 by 56.5 cm. (Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia).