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CHICAGO JOURNALS



Emanuele Barletti, ed. *Giovan Antonio Dosio da San Gimignano: architetto e scultor fiorentino tra Roma, Firenze e Napoli*

Giovan Antonio Dosio da San Gimignano: architetto e scultor fiorentino tra Roma, Firenze e Napoli by Emanuele Barletti

Review by: Ian Campbell

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Emanuele Barletti, ed. *Giovan Antonio Dosio da San Gimignano: architetto e scultor fiorentino tra Roma, Firenze e Napoli*.

Florence: Edifir, 2011. 842 pp. €98. ISBN: 978-88-7970-350-5.

Whether or not Dosio remains “second rank,” as Carolyn Valone judged forty years ago, no art historical library worth its salt will want to be without this monument to Dosian scholarship. I use the term *monument* advisedly, given that this *librone* of a book weighs in at over four kilos or almost nine pounds, making me wonder if it’s time to invest in a Kindle. It is a classic example of the *libri di banca*, the products of a munificent arrangement whereby Italian banks plough back a proportion of their profits into sponsoring scholarship on various aspects of the history, topography, or art of a region or a national figure. One hopes this is not the swansong of the genre, beautifully produced with copious color illustrations of countless details of buildings, sculptures, and drawings, as the European financial crisis eats into Italy’s banking system.

Within the book are thirty-two essays covering almost every aspect of Dosio’s career as a sculptor, architect, and draughtsman, only his printmaking and

cartography being neglected. It is divided into five sections, the first covering general themes, such as his use of the orders (two essays by Morolli and by Bertonicini Sabatini) and his drawings (Marciano on architecture and Sferazza on sculpture), concluding with a short essay by Acidini Luchinat, adding more drawings to the Dosian corpus. The middle three parts cover Dosio's career in the three main centers he worked: Rome (1548–75), Florence (1575–90), and Naples (1590–1611). The Roman section opens with an overview by Valone, followed by essays on seven projects, mostly sculptural, including new attributions to Dosio of a bust (by Spinelli) and of at least part of the Oratorio del Gonfalone (by Barletti). Florence follows with thirteen essays, of which six are by Barletti and two by Morrogh writing alone and one together, mostly on architectural subjects, including several new or at least confirmed attributions, such as the exquisite Villa di Bellosguardo at Lastra a Signa (by Bonavoglia and Parrini) and the church of S. Maria della Neve (Barletti). Naples has only three essays, but all of considerable length, beginning with Daniela del Pesco richly reworking her groundbreaking 1992 article on Dosio's Neapolitan oeuvre, focusing on the fascinating Oratorian church of the Gerolamini, built as a return to early Christian basilical form. There follow an essay by Catalona on the building of Certosa di San Martino, and one on Dosio's work at Caserta (by Giorgi). Finally, ninety pages are given over to a chronology with archival sources, and to an annotated bibliography.

The absence of any sort of postlude is felt slightly. After such a rich feast (a Roman *primo*, Florentine *secondo*, and Neapolitan *dolce*), one needs a *caffè* and a large *digestivo* to contemplate what one has taken in. It is good to see that some of the pioneers of the revival of interest in Dosio in the 1970s (Valone and Morolli and Acidini Luchinat) are represented here but the more recent advances in Dosian scholarship are in large part due to Morrogh and Barletti, whose contributions form the backbone of the book. Their essays present us with master classes in an old art historical methodology school (to be taken as a compliment). Displaying their formidable command of the Dosian drawing corpus in the Uffizi, they combine connoisseurship with meticulous detective work in Florence's incomparably complete archives to show Dosio's hand in the evolution of one project after another. Inevitably this results in a Tuscan bias, with over 300 pages devoted to a quarter of his career (fifteen years), compared to about 150 devoted to Rome (twenty-five years) and 120 to Naples (twenty years). However, the very welcome growth in knowledge of Dosio in Naples is proportionately greater, and we can look forward to more discoveries there. And Barletti in his work on the Gonfalone demonstrates that, despite the patchier archival sources, we should not despair of putting flesh on Borghini's tantalizing remark that Dosio worked on *molte fabbriche* during his twenty-five years in Rome. I look forward with eagerness to find out what Barletti and his collaborators discover next.

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