of slumped corporeality, while in Tournier's *Entombment* a less modulated chiaroscuro deprives the action of bodily weight. The gracefulness that distinguishes Tournier's figures also emerges in the thematic group 'Saints'. Among depictions of half-bust Saints surrounding Caravaggio's *St. Jerome*, viewers are presented with Tournier's elegant *St. Andrew*, stylistically closer to Ribera's *St. Andrew* for their modelling of bodily volumes, expressive intensity and tactile treatment of the surfaces – later found in Ribera's *David and Goliath*. The comparison with Ribera's image of the Saint, however, reveals Tournier's different use of light. Instead of dramatically descending from above, it is evenly spread, creating playful colour variations on St. Andrew's garments.

The juxtaposition of Caravaggio's *St. Jerome* and Serodine's *St. Peter Reading* is even more striking. Despite the similarity of the composition, Serodine's painting is built from thick impasto and heavy brushstrokes, which create a warm and glimmering ambience. This technique makes Serodine's style unmistakable when viewers later encounter his *Christ Among the Doctors*. His rendering of flickering candlelight diverges from the dim illumination and murky atmosphere in van Honthorst's *Christ before the High Priest* and the *Beheading of St. John the Baptist* displayed in the same room, whose figures emerge from choreographed darkness as they approach the candle. This lightening also differentiates Dutch artists' genre paintings from Manfredi's gloomy *Drinking and Musical Party,* populated by shabby figures, or from Régnier's dramatically lit and quasi-theatrical characters in his *Cardsharps and Fortune Teller.*

These are but a few of the suggestive comparisons that this exhibition offers. Viewers are encouraged to discover relations among the paintings and pictorial uniqueness through an independent work of observation. Audio-guides are provided, but textual explanations are omitted from the exhibition space, which can be experienced as an early modern gallery. Themes alone are specified, enabling the viewers to skip the meaning-making moment and to focus on the pictorial components of the paintings. Engaging in visual analysis, after all, was at the core of the collecting drive of early modern patrons. Through repetition and differentiation, viewers realise the power of Valentin's characters, Tournier's grace, Vouet's pearlescent colors, the gloom in the eyes of Manfredi's figures, van Hornost's semidarkness, ter Brugghen's warm glow of dawn. In this exhibition, visitors finally seize the numerous peculiarities that make these canvases wonderful things of their own.

1   Peter Drotman (ed.), *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 9, No. 12, Dec. 2003, pp. 1509–1666.
2   David Franklin and Sebastian Schütze (eds.), *Caravaggio. His followers in Rome*, Yale, 2011, 26-47.
3   Bernd Ebert and Liesbeth M. Helmus (eds.), *Utrecht, Caravaggio and Europe*, Munich, 2018.

Alice Marinelli

'Mantegna and Bellini', National Gallery, London, 1 October 2018 – 27 January 2019

'Together they shaped the art of the Renaissance', states the subheading of the exhibition 'Mantegna and Bellini', held in London at the National Gallery. Tracing the careers of the two artists, it displays over six rooms a vast number of paintings and drawings, in the attempt to uncover

similarities and highlight differences in their pictorial aesthetics.

Andrea Mantegna (1431 – 1506) and Giovanni Bellini (1433 – 1516) are influential and celebrated personalities of early modern Northern Italian art. The two artists were related via marriage, as Nicolosia Bellini, Giovanni's sister, married Mantegna in 1453. More a calculated strategic alliance than a happy coincidence, this marriage increased the power of the Bellini family, which acquired a talented associate and concurrently eliminated the risk for competition.

Current scholarship in the field of early modern Italian art tends to focus on the images' relationship to dominant cultural discourses of the time (for instance, the dialogue between changing visual practices and the possibilities of representation). This exhibition, however, carefully avoids such themes, and remains faithful to traditional strategies of display and interpretation. The very term 'Renaissance', featured in the exhibition title, is considered problematic for its reliance on teleological perspectives. 'Mantegna and Bellini' follows a chronological structure, and proceeds by juxtaposing paintings of similar content in order to compare and contrast the different styles and iconological concerns of the two artists. While this method might be an effective didactic strategy, it quickly becomes repetitive and restrictive.

'Mantegna and Bellini' provides extensive wall texts, both in Italian and English – which, instead of encouraging accessibility, seem to reinforce the impression of art as distant and unapproachable. In the first room, 'Beginnings', viewers learn about the artists' backgrounds and are encouraged to compare the two *Presentation of Christ in the Temple* (Mantegna, 1455; Bellini, 1460). The captions highlight Bellini's visual

and intellectual complexities, as well as Mantegna's representation of motion and animation. These rather stark judgements inform the whole exhibition, imposing a certain iconographic perspective to the images rather than allowing similarities and discrepancies to emerge in a more organic way.

The second room, 'Explorations', focuses mainly on devotional paintings and investigates possible intellectual and creative exchanges between the artists. A striking series of preparatory drawings is positioned in the middle of the room, but the space is dominated by the two famous *Agony in the Garden* (Mantegna, 1455; Bellini, 1459-65), placed one next to the other. Bellini's painting displays an interest in natural forms and human figures, merged with a pictorial space defined by light and colour. Mantegna's version includes a precise *disegno*, monumental human figures, dramatic foreshortening and elaborate perspectival viewpoints. The curators, however, suggest that at this stage Bellini attempted to incorporate Mantegna's inventions and visual innovations, absorbing into his personal style visual strategies such as bolder foreshortenings and precise perspectival planes. Such a hasty summary, while somewhat necessary for the purposes of the exhibition, is inadequate to address the complexities of these images. Instead of proposing a progressive understanding of art, according to which it develops through technical innovations and breakthroughs, it would have been more engaging to explore how each painting combines imaginative pictorial practices.

The fourth room, 'Landscape', is perhaps the most effective in offering interpretative discourses regarding these artists and their cultures. Its strength is the juxtaposition of

paintings of fictional spaces from classical mythology or didactic stories, such as Mantegna's *Triumph of the Virtues* (1502) with religious scenes. These images seem to come to life, and the constant attempt to find answers and explanations for complex iconographies is temporarily abandoned to allow figures and spaces to resonate more freely.

Room five is dedicated to 'Devotional Paintings and Portraits'. A small, intimate space, it is dominated by the genre of *sacra conversazione*, to which are juxtaposed secular images such as the celebrated portrait of Doge Leonardo Loredan (Bellini, 1501-02). The reduced scale of this room evokes the intended use of these paintings, originally meant for private devotion and display.

Finally, the last room, 'Antiquity', dedicated to paintings that take up ancient subjects, is dominated by the monumental *Triumphs of Caesar* (Mantegna, c.1484–92), in an intricate display of perspectival space and complex viewing relations. These massive paintings are contrasted with Bellini's smaller sculptural monochrome panel of around 1506. In this case, the association is fruitful as it displays different imaginative approaches to early modern constructions of the past and of ancient art. The differences in size, colour and animation between the *Triumphs* and the monochrome panel are eloquent, and while captions remain vague, they gently guide viewers through these complex images, at least to an iconological level.

The subheading quoted at the start of this review is perhaps the clearest indicator of the curators' conservative methodologies. That vague claim rests upon generic ideas of 'high art' and does not seem to offer a meaningful contribution to neither widespread nor scholarly understandings of Bellini and Mantegna's artworks. Throughout the exhibition, captions insist on questions of attribution and patronage, constantly referring to rigid canons of 'Renaissance beauty'. The exaggerated value attached to the concept of 'genius' might be attractive to a certain public, but indicates a refusal to engage with more compelling debates regarding image production and visual analysis. Critical questions are avoided and replaced by an all too familiar discussion of early modern art. More importantly, the numerous juxtapositions and comparisons often fail to form a solid argument.

The attempt to attract a 'safe' demographic and to encourage acts of performative connoisseurship strongly limits the impact of this exhibition. Relying on outdated modes of engagement with images, it reinforces a problematic rhetoric of intellectualism, rather than expanding the interpretative possibilities of early modern artworks. Despite its potential, 'Mantegna and Bellini' seems to impose new boundaries, and viewers lose the opportunity to engage independently with such remarkable paintings.

Laura Scalabrella Spada

Chad Elias, *Posthumous Images: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2018, 264 pages, paperback, ISBN 9780822347668, $25.95.

From 1975-1990, Lebanon was plagued by political turmoil and civil strife, fomented by unending sectarian conflict and repeated