istic. The richness of the Florentine archives also ensures that we have very considerable documentation on those involved.

Impressive as this development was on one level, it seems to me that it has tended to overshadow the creativity in the art of the book of other areas of Italy, particularly the so-called '*area Padana*' of north-east Italy. Here the interest in classical antiquity, as seen in the work of the most gifted artist of the area, Andrea Mantegna, resulted in new pictorial experiments in spatial illusion which immediately affected the book artists who created new forms of architectural frontispiece (*antiporta* is the term increasingly used in Italy), of three-dimensional initials and of classicising forms of decoration. In some cases the illuminators were personal friends or pupils of Mantegna. This has all become much clearer in the scholarship of the last forty years and was demonstrated in the recent exhibitions on Mantegna in Italy and France last year. In some ways it is puzzling that Federico apparently did not become aware of these developments sooner. A significant documented step was the negotiations in 1478 with Guglielmo Giraldi to illuminate his Dante. That its illumination should be entrusted to an artist from Ferrara rather than from Florence is certainly striking. The earlier publications of Giordana Mariani Canova and, in the Urbino catalogue, the entries by Silvia Fumian and Federica Toniolo, as well as the latter's important essay, have revised and expanded the attributions of earlier scholarship. As a result the process by which this change of direction took place has been greatly clarified. In addition to Giraldi, other important northern illuminators are Franco dei Russi, whose career had started some thirty years earlier with his work on the great Bible of Borso d'Este of Ferrara, Pietro Guindaleri, now at last satisfactorily identified from his work on a Pliny for the Gonzaga of Mantua, and Giovanni Correnti, who signed his name in a copy of Campano's *Life* of the *condottiere* Braccio Fortebraccio. The work of Bartolomeo della Gatta, an illuminator and painter working mainly in Umbria, who illuminated a Petrarch for Federico, now in Madrid, as well as the Antiphonal of Urbino Cathedral already mentioned, has also recently been defined more clearly by Cecilia Martelli.

One intriguing question, which was raised in this exhibition, is where these artists worked. Many of the Florentine codices, including the duke's great Bible, must have been made in Florence under Vespasiano's supervision. We have a few documented instances of manuscripts which had been written in one city being sent to another for illumination, for example from Brescia to Milan, so that could certainly happen. On the other hand it is clear that Giraldi, for example, moved to Urbino from Ferrara, and there is copious evidence of the establishment of scribes and artists in particular cities under the protection of particular patrons, for example, in Ferrara or in Naples. Board and lodging were often part of an artist's remuneration.

Martelli has argued convincingly in essays in both catalogues that a '*scriptorium*' was established in Urbino in which some of the Florentine illuminators newly identified by her and Ada Labriola worked. For such artists, as well as for those from further north, the duke's death must have been a bitter blow. The prolific scribe Federico Veterano, who entered the duke's service as a boy (*adulescens*), expressed his feelings in at least eleven of his colophons: 'All my hopes and all my security ('*refugium*') have perished'.

[1] M. Simonetta, ed.: exh. cat. *Federico da Montefeltro and his Library*, New York (Morgan Library and Museum) 2007; reviewed by Lilian Armstrong in this Magazine, 149 (2007), pp.582–84.

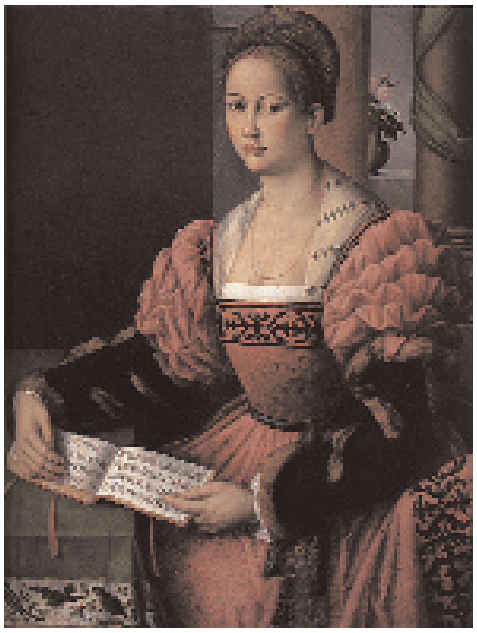
[2] I would issue a heartfelt plea to my Italian colleagues to recognise how dreadfully hard it is to make use of their scholarship without the help of an index of manuscripts!

Bachiacca: Artist of the Medici Court.

By Robert G. La France. 460 pp. incl. 75 col. + 105 b. & w. ills. (Leo S. Olschki, Florence, 2008), €140. ISBN 978–88–22257–64–2.

Reviewed by DAVID FRANKLIN

BETRAYING ITS ORIGINS as an academic thesis, this book on the Florentine sixteenth-century painter Bachiacca (Fig.48) is refreshingly old-fashioned in its unhurried, diligent approach and sumptuous design, with a complete catalogue and appendix of documents quoted in full. Only among Florentine art historians would one find such an obsessively detailed attention to the archival traces of a painter of Bachiacca's 'minor' calibre and current reputation, many of which are more useful for social history than for the explication of artistic style. Given the richness of the Florentine archives, the crucial outlines of the painter's career have been known for some time and it has to be admitted that even this exhaustive book does not significantly alter the factual record. The most important new archival discoveries presented here are the tax returns which provide a full context for the material existence of Bachiacca and his family. This meticulous approach reminds us that some Florentine artists of this period are still under-investigated, especially those at this comparable level of skill and ambition such as the Tasso family of sculptors, not to mention Ridolfo Ghirlandaio and the members of his workshop. Indeed, in this regard Bachiacca has had some revenge on his principal detractor, Giorgio Vasari, who still lacks an up-to-date, exhaustive monograph on his paintings and drawings.



48. *Portrait of a woman with a music book*, by Bachiacca. 1540–45. Oil, tempera and gold on panel, 103 by 80 cm. (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles).

The book's achievement, which is considerable, is mainly analytical as the author attempts to bring Bachiacca back to the mainstream of the discussion of Florentine sixteenth-century painting. Born the same year as Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino, Bachiacca has not received the critical acclaim those artists now enjoy. Yet, while he inevitably suffered the same critical eclipse as the other Florentine Mannerists, he was among the first to be rediscovered in the early twentieth century because he was so prolific and his works were so widely dispersed. Despite the consistency of his style, the early, piecemeal examination of his corpus resulted in its own confusions, which still require unravelling. The author expends considerable effort distinguishing the various hands in Bachiacca's workshop – a credible achievement of connoisseurship given the complexity of that workshop and the artist's protracted development over a career lasting some four decades.

The flurry of interest in Bachiacca from the 1950s to the 1970s corresponded to the rise of Mannerism as a subject worthy of investigation. Yet as part of a condescending view of it as a derivative style slavishly dependent on the likes of Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo (and northern European prints), Bachiacca's work seemed to provide a perfect example of the eclectic but rather weak-willed Mannerist artist. It is that derogatory tone that La France attempts to discredit. Bachiacca has always been classed as a 'small' painter who preferred not to attempt monumental nudes. A devoted pupil of Perugino in Florence, he was an eclectic artist who drew on diverse sources (all painstakingly analysed here). La France courageously wishes to see this eclecticism not only as deliberate but as a virtue. The book contains an epilogue on the origins of the nickname 'Bachiacca' as representing a pun on the vocation of his ancestors as harvesters of chestnuts and secondly on his eclectic approach to creativity.

In rehabilitating Bachiacca, La France has explored an entrenched facet of Florentine taste at that period – Ridolfo Ghirlandaio was equally esteemed for his craftsmanship, reliability and his evocation of the art of a glorious past, and was paid handsomely for it: it is in this context that Bachiacca should be judged, patronised as he was by the elite. He is even described as belonging to the 'cosmopolitan' culture of the Medici court, although there seems to have been no export market for his painting, and his one documented excursion to Rome in c.1524 did not affect his style. La France's assessment of Bachiacca's paintings as safe surrogates for Netherlandish works in this lucrative market is highly credible and accounts for the artist's success, his reluctance to develop his style and for his focus, uncharacteristic for a Florentine, on landscape, even if he never attempted to emulate the spiritual charge of Northern art. Finally, seeing Bachiacca's approach as fundamentally decorative in not differentiating even in his subject paintings between the human figure, expertly transposed from Michelangelo or Northern prints, and a bird or fish, provides another key to understanding the work of this richly fascinating painter and helps restore him to the more central place in Florentine art history he once occupied.

Gold Brocade and Renaissance Painting. A Study in Material Culture.

By Rembrandt Duits. 494 pp. incl. 20 col. + 207 b. & w. ills. (Pindar Press, London, 2008), £150. ISBN 978–1–904597–42–1.

Reviewed by MARGARET SCOTT

THIS BOOK CONSIDERS the uses, in real life and in paintings, of the most expensive fabrics ever known, gold-brocaded silks. It seeks to show that the upper classes, rather than commission paintings, spent their money on real gold brocades for personal wear and on other items made of, or heavily reliant on gold, whereas the middle classes spent their money on donating gold-brocaded fabrics to the church or, more usually, on paintings in which saints could be provided with clothing and hangings painted as gold brocade. It is not a history of textiles, but uses some extant textiles to argue that silks in paintings were often based on the designs of real, cheaper silks, made more lavish by the addition of gold, to create cloths that had no counterparts in the real world.

These fictional textiles came about partly because artists could rarely afford even small pieces of the real things as models. The book takes us through the methods used or advocated by painters for reproducing the effects of sumptuous textiles; the relative costs of silks and paintings; the uses to which gold brocades were put by the State; and when gold brocades were worn and by whom, with particular emphasis on the Valois dukes of Burgundy and their pale Italian imitators, the Medici of Florence. The book's cover illustration, showing one of the Van Eycks' angels wearing velvet cloth of gold from the Ghent altarpiece, reminds us both of the innovations in Northern painting of simulating silks and of the great esteem that Northern art enjoyed in Italy.

Unfortunately, the theory that aristocrats preferred golden objects over painting results in one aspect of aristocratic patronage being almost totally overlooked, the illuminated manuscript, where, particularly in the fifteenth century, aristocratic patrons and their historical and fictional counterparts can be seen dressed in cloth of gold. A study of the manuscript illuminations showing Alfonso of Aragon, King of Naples, and Charles the Bold, the last Valois Duke of Burgundy, would have dismissed Duits's idea that these rulers preferred to be shown soberly dressed when depicted in works of art.

The book offers a number of other 'insights' that cannot be sustained in the light of fuller analysis, for example that the dukes of Burgundy are shown lavishly dressed primarily when they are depicted as vassals of the French crown. This hypothesis ignores the paucity of images of the first two dukes, the almost autonomous behaviour of the second two, and Charles the Bold's use of cloths of gold of incredibly expensive and complex types to bolster his image as a potentially independent ruler.

The section that compares the costs of silks with the wages of master builders clearly demonstrates just how expensive silks, especially cloths of gold, were. A little over half a metre of satin would have cost a Florentine builder over three days' wages; an equivalent length of cloth of gold could have cost well over two months' wages. But there are important points not considered. If gold brocades were so expensive that states tried to stop (mostly) women from wasting money on them, how could those same states expect women to have access to such cloth for displays of civic wealth? How could a mere bourgeois afford to make them? Were the modest incomes declared by the middle-class silk manufacturers as fictional as some of the silks in paintings?

A non-specialist reader would have benefited from a clearer discussion of textile terms, especially that of gold brocade. Initially, a technique known as brocading used gold thread only in small areas to create a pattern on a piece of cloth. Confusingly the large patterns worked in velvet against gold grounds (the most commonly depicted and also the most expensive) in fifteenth-century fabrics are also called brocades; for these the alternative term 'velvet cloths of gold' is much more useful.

One should be cautious in accepting the terms used for both textiles and dress. Fabrics described as '*tissus d'or*' are those that have clusters of loops of gold thread. In Jacob Seisenegger's portrait of Charles V (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) the emperor is said to be wearing a white damask robe. The artist's bill (not discussed here) describes the garment as a white silver gown, suggesting that the fabric was made of silver thread on a white ground (as its harsh glint implies). It would have been helpful to have been given more clues to distinguish patterned velvets from damasks; had the books on dress in the bibliography been consulted more thoroughly, fewer errors of identification would have been made.

While this book should be welcomed in its attempt to challenge the reader to think about how a contemporary would have 'read' paintings, that reader should be prepared to check statements and to seek coloured reproductions of the many black-and-white illustrations, and may wonder if the book, like the fabrics it discusses, is perhaps too expensive.

Print Publishing in Sixteenth-Century Rome: Growth, Expansion, Rivalry and Murder.

By Christopher L.C.E. Witcombe. 475 pp. incl. 318 b. & w. ills. (Harvey Miller, London, 2008), €160. ISBN 978–1–905375–14–1.

Reviewed by PETER PARSHALL

OF THE KEY periods in old-master printmaking perhaps the least well catalogued and interpreted is sixteenth-century Italy, especially Rome. There are overviews of Venetian prints and book illustration, an extensive corpus of Mantuan engraving and some attention to major figures active in Florence, Siena and Bologna; but only lately have scholars returned to the archives to resume the work undertaken in Rome by Franz Ehrle and others early in the last century. Foremost among recent forays is Michael Bury's fundamental exhibition catalogue *The Print in Italy: 1550–1620*,[1] which devotes a substantial section to the Holy City. In addition, there have been focused studies of Antonio Lafreri's publishing house, various exhibition catalogues, and topical monographs incorporating artists working in Rome. Seen against this background, Christopher Witcombe has made a noteworthy contribution simply by having compiled the most inclusive pictorial survey to date of Roman printmaking throughout the century.

Witcombe's thesis is that print publishing in Rome evolved from the small-scale promotion of the print as a work of art to a large-scale commercial enterprise responding to 'public taste'. Accordingly, chapter one concentrates on the collaboration of Raphael and Marcantonio Raimondi, the first known instance of a major artist working closely with a professional printmaker. Here Witcombe devotes perhaps more attention than it merits to Albrecht Dürer's putative lawsuit against Marcantonio for copying a suite of woodcuts and employing the 'AD' monogram. The only source for this frequently cited case is Vasari, whose report is tangled with factual contradictions and has never been corroborated in the archives. Although the story itself provides evidence of concern over copyright on Vasari's part, it is a tenuous basis for inferring actual practice in c.1510–15. This is but