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Pittura di marmo: Storia e fortuna delle pale d'altare a rilievo nella Roma di Bernini (Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum', Serie I: Letteratura, Paleografia, 470)

By Stefano Pierguidi. 292 pp. incl. 95 b. & w. ills. (Leo S. Olschki Editore, Florence, 2017), £50. ISBN 978-88-222-6509-8.

by JENNIFER MONTAGU

The scope of this informative and stimulating study of altar reliefs in Rome runs from Guglielmo della Porta's projected marble or bronze reliefs for St Peter's in the mid-sixteenth century to well into the eighteenth century. Within that span the author considers all existing altar reliefs (in itself a useful compendium) as well as numerous reliefs of other types and comparative works. Discussing these in chronological order, he is able to show how each innovative idea served as a model, or more often a challenge, to the sculptor's contemporaries and rivals, a revealing approach in contrast to the more usual consideration of such sculpture within the stylistic evolution of individual artists. Indeed, the book provides an overview of the sculptural milieu of the time and of the variety within the medium as each sculptor eyed the activity of his rivals with enmity, criticism or admiration.

The author places much emphasis on theory, although the attention given to applying Vasari's distinction between 'mezzo-rilievo' (half relief) and 'basso-rilievo' (low relief) is not particularly helpful or illuminating. As Pierguidi admits, in the sixteenth century the terminology was imprecise and, even if Gian Lorenzo Bernini was critical of the use of figures carved almost completely in the round in Alessandro Algardi's highly influential narrative relief *Encounter of Leo the Great and Attila* (1646–53; St Peter's, Rome), sculptors appear to have been more concerned with the effect of their reliefs than with how one might describe the means by which they achieved it.

The focus of the book is on Bernini and his evident reluctance to engage with this form of sculpture. Despite his pride in having collaborated at a young age with his father on the relief of the coronation of Clement VIII in the Pauline Chapel, this reviewer suspects that he was well aware of the problems only partially overcome in Pietro's magisterial *Assumption of the Virgin* (1607–10) in S. Maria Maggiore (which was not originally intended as an altarpiece). As the author points out,

Bernini cannot have been encouraged by the lack of success of his own relief of 'Feed my sheep' for St Peter's (1633–46). In addition, he may well have recognised the superiority of Algardi's relief on the sarcophagus of Leo XI (designed before 1635?) as compared to his own on the tomb of Countess Matilda of Tuscany, completed in 1644. To see his main rival outdoing him twice in the principal basilica in Rome cannot have been encouraging. If the *Transverberation of St Teresa* (1647–52; S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome) was his riposte to the *Leo the Great and Attila*, it proved his superiority, but that altarpiece is not strictly a relief. Only with the *Vision of Constantine*, set up in the atrium of St Peter's in 1669, did Bernini finally produce a relief sculpture that was both innovative and successful, even if it found critics at the time – Pierguidi's suggestion that one of the pamphlets against it was written by Algardi's former assistant Domenico Guidi is an interesting idea, although unproven. Nor, despite his chapter on Bernini's theory, does the author entirely convince this reviewer that this very high relief exemplifies Bernini's belief that 'in bas-reliefs the great skill lies in making to appear in relief that which is not in relief', although the *Vision of Constantine* is certainly a long way from those reliefs that attempted to imitate paintings (typified by Algardi's *Leo and Attila*), which Bernini despised.

Pierguidi sees the sixteenth century as a period of intense rivalries and enmities: Bernini versus Algardi (of course), Bernini versus Guidi (plausible) and Guidi versus Carlo Fontana (acceptable). Less convincing is the presumed enmity between Guidi and Ercole Ferrata, for which Pierguidi relies almost exclusively on their commissions for work in S. Agnese. There is no evidence that Ferrata was originally in control of the sculpture there; Pierguidi misinterprets the payments for the completion of Melchiorre Caffà's relief of the *Martyrdom of St Eustace* in S. Agnese, which do not prove that Ferrata lost interest in the church when the Pamphilj patrons turned to Guidi, and the author's account of the relationship between the two sculptors is pure speculation.

The book's approach is illuminating and invigorating, but it may oversimplify a more complex situation of compromises and shifting relationships. The black-and-white illustrations, almost all from standard commercial sources, are numerous. Some, however, do not show the complete object and almost none show it *in situ*, or provide any idea of the scale, nor are these aspects discussed in the text.

Dans l'œil du connaisseur: Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774) et la construction des savoirs en histoire de l'art

By Valérie Kobi. 322 pp. incl. 15 col. + 34 b. & w. ills. (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2017), £58. ISBN 978-2-7535-5314-9.

by CHRISTOPH VOGTHERR

Valérie Kobi's study is an important addition to the recent publications on the eighteenth-century dealer, collector and connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774). Like Kristel Smentek's *Mariette and the Science of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (2014),¹ Kobi seeks to contextualise Mariette's highly influential method of connoisseurship, which shaped art history for centuries. Both books aim to root Mariette in the eighteenth century and both consider him as an international phenomenon. Both are interested in his stay at the court of Prince Eugene of Savoy in Vienna in 1717–18, an important moment in the European art world that had not been fully understood. However, whereas Smentek's book is based primarily on an in-depth analysis of Mariette's collection of drawings and prints, Kobi's main sources are his correspondence, much of it unpublished, and his publications.

In the first part of her book, the author examines Mariette's socio-cultural context and networks. She carefully reconstructs his early career, especially the tour that took him first to Vienna and then to Naples, and discusses how Mariette established the knowledge and contacts that he later employed to propel his social rise. Her analysis of his correspondence and publications allows her to identify the social expectations and frameworks that shaped his intellectual activities. In the second part of the book, Kobi investigates Mariette's publications from several perspectives: the importance for his work of the catalogue as a literary genre, his use of illustrations and his writings on the sculptor Edmé Bouchardon, whom Kobi presents as a collaborator. For Mariette, Bouchardon's work served as a key example for his arguments about aesthetics.

Kobi's analysis of Mariette's networks is a major contribution to the understanding of connoisseurship in the early eighteenth century, which until recently has been perceived merely as a stage in the development of scholarly art history. She emphasises the role social structures and customs played in shaping Mariette's views and scholarly production. His career path