



3. Cabinet of Archduke Ferdinand II. Nuremberg or Mantua, c.1582. Ebony, maple, walnut and silver, 75 by 62 by 45 cm. (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

the author. The reader learns, for example, how global collectors' networks were with respect to the agents, family connections and the exchange of gifts. The author repeatedly states the importance of inventories as an aide to reconstructing princely collections by quoting selected passages. It is regrettable that the new digital edition of the inventory of Archduke Ferdinand II, compiled in 1596, a year after his death, was published only after this book went to press.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it demonstrates that a great deal of research is still being carried out in this field.

Overall, the book provides a wealth of information about the phenomenon of the *Kunst-kammer* in the Early Modern period in German-speaking countries. It is an excellent and comprehensive survey of the topic with only a few weaknesses in the details, for instance when analyses of objects are based on outdated secondary literature, risking the perpetuation of errors. An example is the misconception that in the Wedding Codex of Archduke Ferdinand II (1582; Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck), Ferdinand is depicted wearing an Aztec feathered headdress, whereas in fact he is wearing a typical contemporary

*all'antica* helmet with plumes, or that in the *Kunst-kammer* at Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck, 'the cupboards were painted in colours that would enhance each material' (p.91). Today, it is believed that there is insufficient evidence for this interpretation, especially since the details of the colours are only documented for eight of the twenty cupboards.<sup>5</sup> Chipps Smith's research may offer little that is new for experts on this subject, but – and this is the book's greatest strength – it makes the fascinating phenomenon of the *Kunst-kammer* accessible to an English-speaking readership.

1 See also: O. Impey and A. MacGregor: *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford 1985. The English edition of Schlosser, published by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann in 2021, was reviewed by Wolfram Koeppel in this Magazine, 165 (2023), pp.803–04.

2 M. Dämming: 'Gabriel Kaltemarckts Bedencken, wie eine kunst-cammer aufzu richten seyn mochte von 1587. Mit einer Einleitung', in D. Syndram, ed.: *Die kurfürstlich-sächsische Kunst-kammer in Dresden: Geschichte einer Sammlung*, Dresden 2012, pp.46–61.

3 M. Wenzel, ed.: *Philipp Hainhofer: Reiseberichte und Sammlungsbeschreibungen 1594–1636. Edition und Datensammlung zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Wolfenbüttel 2020–24.

4 Available at [repository.khm.at/viewer/Nachlassinventar/Ferdinand/1596](https://repository.khm.at/viewer/Nachlassinventar/Ferdinand/1596), accessed 25th July 2024.

5 V. Sandbichler: 'The reconstruction of the "Kunst- and Wunderkammer" of Archduke Ferdinand II: "facts 'n' figures", an interim report', in S. Dobalová and J. Hausenblasová, eds: *Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria: A Second-Born Son in Renaissance Europe*, Vienna 2021, pp.399–414.

### I Fiorentini e il vetro Veneziano (c.1450–1550): Fonti

By Marco Spallanzani. 137 pp. incl. no ills. (Leo S. Olschki Editore, Florence, 2023), €22. ISBN 978-88-222-6864-8.

by DORA THORNTON

On 4th September 1448 the Florentine ambassador Giannozzo Manetti went on a diplomatic mission to Venice, which included a visit to the glasshouses of Murano. His clerk recorded that they 'went to see the master craftsmen of crystalline glass (*vetrii cristallini*) who showed us most engaging work' (p.6). *Cristallino* was a new type of transparent glass of the utmost refinement, lightness and sophistication, the making of which was protected and regulated by the Venetian state. It rapidly took the place of Islamic imports as a luxury product among the European elites, particularly in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and England. The Florentines, quick to identify commercial opportunities and to appreciate aesthetic and technical finesse, had a resident merchant colony in Venice; through its members direct orders could be placed with the leading glasshouses or Murano. They not only supplied the ruling elite of their own city but also demand from patrons in London, Lyon, Cadiz and Constantinople as well as in

other cities in the Italian peninsula such as Milan, Rome and Naples.

The book under review analyses the supply of Venetian glass to clients in all the aforementioned places, as traced through about one hundred Florentine inventories and account books of individuals and merchant banking companies. The archival extracts, all from the Archivio di Stato, Florence, are mostly published here for the first time, each prefaced by an introduction providing the context and a brief analysis of the contents. Supplemented by an excellent index of names and terms used to describe the Venetian glass on order, the documents are easily navigated. They are divided into three sections, starting with documents that attest to the success of Murano *crystallino* in capturing major Florentine clients. There is invaluable material here since, in the case of many different glass forms, techniques and types, the documents note the location in which they can be found, for example in the study (*scrittoio*) of a Florentine palazzo or villa. Particularly fascinating is an order placed in 1475 by Filippo di Matteo Strozzi, the banker who constructed the famous family palace in Florence, with the well-known D'Angelo glasshouse in Murano. Eleven vases of different forms, blown from glass imitating chalcedony (*calcedonio*), were the most expensive pieces, costing more than imported Chinese porcelain. Surviving vessels in *calcedonio* are rare and it is evident that they were always regarded as a special product. Equally rare both in terms of surviving examples and excavated fragments was the opaque turquoise glass of the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In the same year Girolamo Strozzi ordered from Venice various salts including 'a pair of salts in turquoise glass, standing on three gilded spheres' (p.27). Listed among the contents of the *scrittoio* of Bernardo Bini in 1548 was a 'gilded beaker with the arms of the Pucci' (p.57), which probably came to him through the marriage of his sister, Lucrezia, to Gianozzo Pucci in 1483. Glass

decorated with opaque white canes in complex networks (*reticello*) is listed from 1538.

The second section of the book looks at taste and demand at the Medici court, where Cosimo I de' Medici and his consort Eleonora di Toledo made specific orders for glass. Part of a commission for forty-six bespoke gilded glasses in 1549 included a particularly large and fine glass of a type known as 'the Imperial', as it resembled one that had been made for the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. In 1550 their Florentine agent explained that the largest cups and bowls were made of the finest *crystallino*, whereas the smaller more elaborate forms were from a less fine glass that could be worked more easily; these would 'provide a delicate experience when drinking' (p.69). The agent went on to note that the proportions and profiles of each of the forty-six vessels were different one from another and that they had been worked with 'the best caprices of the imagination of which the said masters were capable'; there was also a footed bowl and a cup engraved with the point of a diamond, 'which is a new and highly-regarded style' (p.69).

The third section documents the ways in which Florentine merchants exported Venetian glass to major cities in Europe through their commercial networks. Among the orders is one for an Englishwoman, Lady Joan Smith, in 1524, which included drinking pots with covers in opaque white and blue glass, perhaps of the kind that were set in silver-gilt mounts by London silversmiths in the 1540s. A number with applied handles in glass seem to have been among an order of 1530, which also included soap and parmesan cheese to supply the demands of the London elite.

The book is the latest in a series produced by Marco Spallanzani, one of Florence's greatest archival historians and a noted economic historian. He is perhaps best known for coediting the post-mortem inventory of Lorenzo the Magnificent with Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà in 1992.<sup>1</sup> Each of his publications is, however, of the greatest importance in making previously unpublished archival documents not only available but also intelligible and navigable. The documents analysed here provide an extraordinary insight into Florentine taste, demand and consumption. The book will be invaluable for cultural historians, curators, collectors and students.

<sup>1</sup> M. Spallanzani and G.G. Bertelà, eds: *Libro d'inventario dei beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Florence 1992.

### The Smiling Walls: Dante e le arti figurative / Dante and the Visual Arts

Edited by Rossend Arqués, Silvia Maddalo and Laura Pasquini. 544 pp. incl. 120 col. ills. (Brepols, Turnhout, 2023), €190. ISBN 978-2-503-59450-7.

by DAVID EKSERDJIAN

In 2021 the seventh centenary of Dante's death was commemorated in a variety of ways. In the context of the visual arts, it was celebrated principally by a whole host of exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues, but also by books, either by individual authors or armies of them on a wide variety of themes.<sup>1</sup> An example of the former, which is absent from the bibliography of the present volume, is Martin Kemp's *Visions of Heaven: Dante and the Art of Divine Light* (2021), which was perhaps published too late for it to be taken into consideration. *The Smiling Walls*, which boasts no fewer than twenty-three individual contributors, is an only slightly belated instance of the latter. Arguably its oddest feature is the 160 double-column pages of translations into English of the chapters, placed at the end of the book, which are presumably for the benefit of those who will wish to devour its contents but do not read Italian.

These days, the overwhelming majority of such team efforts are the progeny of academic conferences, frequently arranged around exhibitions, and where it is made clear from the outset that participants should expect their papers to be published. This weighty volume is an exception. Here it is plain that the editors came up with both the broad concept and the individual topics that should be addressed: one of the authors disarmingly refers to the 'theme assigned to me' (p.179). As will be explored more fully below, this level of control turns out to be a double-edged sword.

The book's ambition is to begin by examining monumental decorative schemes that may have inspired Dante and then to proceed to explore a wide range of alleged visual responses to the *Divine Comedy* from the middle of the fourteenth century to the end of the sixteenth (manuscripts, printed books and their ilk are wisely excluded). In the case of the decorative schemes, the general idea is entirely sound, but the degree of certainty concerning whether Dante ever saw the works in question is distinctly variable. He can hardly have failed to wander into the Florentine Baptistry and look up at its mosaics (in Canto XIX of the

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