

Carmelo Occhipinti. *Primaticcio e l'arte di gettare le statue di bronzo: Il mito della "seconda Roma" nella Francia del XVI secolo.*

Rome: UniversItalia, 2010. 252 pp. append. illus. bibl. €21. ISBN: 978-88-6507-041-3.

In his 1568 life of Francesco Primaticcio, Giorgio Vasari celebrates the transformation of the French royal palace at Fontainebleau into a new Rome. Vasari associates this development with the large bronze copies of Belvedere statues Francis I commissioned from Primaticcio in the early 1540s. The bronzes attest to an easy atmosphere of Franco-Italian collaboration that characterized Francis's reign: whereas Primaticcio and Vignola managed the selection of prototypes and the taking of piece-molds, French sculptors and founders realized these works at the Fontainebleau foundry. Like other recent scholarship on the French Renaissance, Carmelo Occhipinti's book draws from a broad range of original sources to critically investigate forces that shaped cultural production. This mode of inquiry takes us beyond the now familiar cross-fertilization of Italian theory and French practice that has been particularly well-analyzed by architectural historians of Serlio, de l'Orme, Lescot, and Bullant.

Occhipinti presents a rich selection of primary sources and brings them swiftly into relation with the ambit of Francis's bronzes. They include a French-produced Latin edition of the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius of Caesarea, Pierre Gilles's *De Topographia Constantinopoleos*, Gilles Corrozet's *Les Antiquitez, Croniques et Singuralitez de Paris*, a set of ekphrastic Latin epigrams by Fausto Sabeo, testimony of Italian ambassadors to the French court, excerpts from the writings of Benvenuto Cellini, and two essays by Michel de Montaigne. Occhipinti's stated purpose is not to defend a single thesis, but to propose avenues of research to his own students and to demonstrate how such sources may be mined in a historically sensitive — but not narrowly positivistic — way. Each text reappears in the appendix in a longer excerpt, accompanied by a brief introduction. Occhipinti has already published a large portion of this material as separate articles, but the aggregate format offers significant added value. Despite its modest pedagogical aim, the book is replete with insights that are of interest to specialists.

As Occhipinti notes, the notion of a second Rome has a Byzantine provenance because Constantinople was the original "new Rome." This fact would not have been lost upon French readers of the new Latin edition of the Byzantine historian Procopius's *De Aedificiis* or the contemporary chronicler Pierre Gilles's *De Topographia Constantinopoleos*. There are obvious parallels between the "new Rome" strategies of Constantine and Francis, including the transplantation of artists and artifacts from the old Rome to the new Rome as vehicles of the ruler's magnificence. The city of Constantinople was adorned with marvelous monuments, such as colossal bronze equestrian statues of emperors. Among its masterpieces of earlier Greek art was even the Knidian Venus of Praxiteles (at least according to Gilles's sources), the very statue whose copy Primaticcio had copied in bronze. Although the vision of Constantinople is not commonly linked to Francis's patronage, here it persuasively illuminates several other sculptural endeavors, such

as the unrealized projects for bronze equestrian monuments to Francis by Leonardo da Vinci and then Gianfrancesco Rustici, and Cellini's unrealized plan for a fountain that featured a colossal bronze figure of Mars. The recourse to cultural models outside of contemporary Italy and the Rome of the Caesars reinforces the idea that the French "new Rome" was more than an emulative operation or shift in aesthetic taste; paradoxically, there was also a deep ideological undercurrent of rivalry with Italy. This was true for Fontainebleau as well as for Paris, as seen in French discourses (e.g., Corrozet) proclaiming Paris as a superior alternative to Rome.

Another concern of this book is the emergence of French theoretical categories and technical concepts for sculptural practice. Occhipinti addressed similar themes in his earlier impressive study of the conceptualization of drawing (*Il disegno in Francia nella letteratura artistica del Cinquecento* [2003]), which revealed a French resistance to *non finito* (or incomprehension of it as an expressive modality) in favor of high finish. Here, interesting new linguistic differentiations between sculptors of marble and sculptors of bronze are identified. Occhipinti addresses Cellini in this context, and his excellent discussion would have been enriched by incorporating Michael Cole's research on Cellini's language for articulating his self-conception as a bronze sculptor.

A few factual errors appear in the text. Occhipinti states that the heart urns of Francis I and Henri II no longer survive, and that they were made of bronze (90). The urn of Francis I, housed at Saint-Denis, is made entirely of marble. The marble heart monument of Henri II, now in the Louvre, did contain a lost bronze urn, which has been replaced by a nineteenth-century gilded wood copy. There is also a small problem of interpretation: Occhipinti asserts that the placement of the bronzes in the gardens and in outdoor niches after Francis's death was a consequence of their devaluation. This is misleading for several reasons, but especially because Vasari's glowing account of Fontainebleau as a second Rome centered on the bronzes located "nel giardino della reina." In its totality, however, this thought-provoking book offers new perspectives from which to interpret Primaticcio's bronzes and the new Rome ideologies.

NICOLE BENSOUSSAN

Clark University