

The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance: Geography, Mobility, and Style.

David Young Kim.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. x + 294 pp. \$75.

At first glance, Kim's *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance* seems to be a much-needed survey of mobility as it characterized artistic communities in early modern Italy. Yet the title could potentially mislead readers hopeful of a representation of artists' travel in early modern Italy based on original research into biographies and social circumstances. Studies of early modern people in movement, particularly of artists, are notoriously difficult due to the challenging scarcity of sources that document artists' experiences of mobility. While the title of Kim's volume might raise the expectation for the book to provide innovative solutions to the problem of early modern mobility, the book is in fact an exploration of the rhetoric of mobility in early modern Italian erudite discourse. The principal object of Kim's investigation is Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, in which mobility is employed not just as subject, but also as metaphor. The book carefully expounds how art writers of Vasari's caliber and milieu perceived mobility in relation to the artistic landscape of early modern Italy. Kim reconstructs this perception minutely, adding facets to an erudite Renaissance idea of mobility as he traverses several of Vasari's biographies in part 1, shifting focus to the *Dialogo della pittura* (1557) by Ludovico Dolce in part 2 of the book.

The volume's actual accomplishment lies with its reevaluation of the well-known tropes of Italian Renaissance art discourses, such as the Roman-Florentine rivalry and the purification of art through the work of specific artists, in terms of mobility. Kim's close reading of early modern art treatises, mainly Vasari's *Lives* but also a range of contemporary material ranging from natural philosophy to linguistics, is driven by an ambitious desire to reveal the multiple dimensions of the concept of mobility and its contemporary significance, at least within Vasari's circles. Throughout the book, the author weaves in and out of a discussion of artists' actual movements between Italian locations, while letting related concepts, such as difference, influence (in relation to climate, or *aria*), and contamination, come to the fore. While Kim is inappropriately uncritical of terms such as *contamination* (the negative effects of mobility in contemporary perception), he inserts intriguing points regarding the somatic responses of artists to different locales; he also envisions types of artists' movement previously overlooked, such as Brunelleschi's archaeological movement through the Roman debris of antique statuary and architecture.

It is important to note that Kim's delineation of mobility is closely intertwined with stylistic concerns. To the author, style is the instrument through which an artist in Renaissance Italy defined his relationship with a place and that which he could calibrate to suit the needs of patrons. This association of style with mobility allows the author to unearth the intriguing concept of *varietà* (a fluid pictorial lexicon that most traveling artists developed as a result of their mobility) from the lives of Filippino Lippi and Raphael in chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

The visual evidence made available by the author is comprehensive and used creatively to support the concept of artists' mobility as it is unraveled from the textual materials. Not only does Kim use a wide range of examples of Renaissance art, he also draws on other visual sources such as maps, illustrations, and prints, which lend credibility to the notion of mobility he establishes. While the author declares from the outset that this study is not intended as a social history of early modern mobility, the omission of this aspect is problematic. A foray into social history might have allowed Kim to inject his account with impulses from other disciplines (especially migration and exchange studies), balancing the erudite art-theorists' notion of mobility against some of the realities of early modern artists' mobility. This sole focus on mobility in literary culture means that this study merely presents a partial account of what mobility meant in early modern Italy and Europe.

Nonetheless, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance* is a worthy addition to the study of Vasari, and adds a valuable dimension to the complex field of early modern mobility.

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