

Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow, eds. *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*.

Companions to Art History. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. xvii + 630 pp. \$195. ISBN: 978-1-4443-3726-6.

The publisher Wiley-Blackwell describes the series to which this book belongs, Companions to Art History, as “invigorating reference volumes that chart the influence of key ideas, discourses, and theories on art. . . . Each volume brings together a team of respected international scholars to debate the state of research within traditional subfields of art history.”

The genesis of the *Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art*, however, as its editors explain its evolution, compromised its suitability to the publisher's goal. Initially conceived as a *Festschrift* to celebrate David Rosand's retirement at Columbia, it was expanded to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Howard Hibbard's death, and therefore as a volume in honor of two distinguished teachers and scholars of Italian Renaissance and Baroque art, respectively. As a consequence, the majority of the authors were selected because they attended Columbia rather than because they were the most suited choices for contributors to the *Companion*. Nonetheless, the editors sought "to provide a standard reference work that is at once comprehensive in scope, comprehensible to the non-specialist, and representative of the diversity of current approaches within the discipline" (2).

To that end, twenty-eight original essays were commissioned and organized in five broad sections: Context (social-historical factors), the Artist (process and status), the Object (as material culture), the Message (the longest section, with seven essays on "subjects and meaning"), and the Viewer, Critic, and Historian ("reception and interpretation as cultural discourse"). Most of the essays do not go beyond survey-level overviews of traditional topics, including, among others, landscape (by Lawrence Goedde), genre painting (Wayne Frantis), drawing (Mary Vaccaro), printmaking (Alison Stewart), nudes (Thomas Martin), the artist as genius (William Wallace), early biographies (David Cast), Europe's "global vision" (Larry Silver), and, representing more recent subjects of inquiry, women artists (Babette Bohn) and gender and sexuality (James Saslow). Essays by Perry Chapman on self-portraiture; Koenraad Brosens on tapestries, which uniquely points to areas for further study; Claire Barry on what technical analysis of paintings might contribute to art history; Joseph Forte on Vouet and Poussin; and Niall Atkinson on the Italian piazza, the only contribution that could qualify as revisionist, are more provocative. All of the notes and suggestions for further reading concentrate on English-language publications, exclusively so even in a subject as internationally studied as "Religion, Politics, and Art in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy" (Julia Miller). Similarly, Renata Ago's *Il gusto delle cose* (2006), a book that could not be more germane to the essay "The Material Culture of Family Life in Italy and Beyond" (Jacqueline Marie Musacchio), is left out.

Because of the volume's dedicatory motivation and hybrid nature, the balance of topics for a book purported to be comprehensive in scope inevitably is erratic. While space is allotted to Jewish art, a minor field in this context, none is given to connoisseurship, perspective, economics, psychoanalytical approaches, reception theory, artists' materials, and other subjects that are central to key ideas and the state of research in the discipline. Nor is the Baroque in general (the eighteenth century is excluded altogether), or Seicento Italy in particular, well served. Only one of the twenty-eight authors is a specialist in the latter area, which explains but cannot justify the disregard, in a 600-page book, of artists as important as Pietro da Cortona, Francesco Borromini, Alessandro Algardi, and Luca Giordano, let alone the brief citation of Annibale Carracci simply as a landscape painter. The Galleria

Farnese's decisive role in the development of seventeenth-century Italian painting is ignored and, ironically, Bernini's Baldacchino — the main illustration on the book's dust jacket — is never mentioned either. In these pages Renaissance Italy is dominant (no attention at all is paid to England), while Florence, as customary, receives principal consideration.

The publisher is at fault for the small, often muddy illustrations (none is in color), as well as their scarce number, which lessens the effectiveness of the essays and pressed the editors to adopt an unusual system: citations of URLs for illustrations, some as impractical as http://britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=755896&partid=1&searchText=rembrandt+triumph+of+mordecai&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numbpages=10&images=on&oring=%2fresearch%2search_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage=1. Web addresses can be useful when interactive in an e-book, but these do not “offer easy access to additional illustrations that can be consulted while reading.”

According to its editors, the *Companion* was “designed for utility in the classroom, a combination of general introductions to topics in the field that would be useful to upper-level undergraduates and beginning graduate students, as well as a reference work for scholars” (2). It seems unlikely, though, that scholars will benefit from these essays or, given the book's high price and uneven coverage, that it readily will find a niche in classroom teaching. This is regrettable when so many scholars put so much collective effort into a deserved tribute to David Rosand and Howard Hibbard.

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