

Tiziano Vecellio. *Tiziano: L'epistolario*.

Ed. Lionello Puppi and Charles Hope. *Tiziano e l'Europa 3*. Florence: Alinari 24 ore, 2012. 406 pp. €70. ISBN: 978-886302069-4.

Lionello Puppi's magnificent publication of Titian's correspondence is an authoritative edition that may be compared to Golzio's publication on Raphael. Puppi builds upon the archive of the Titian Foundation he directs at Cadore, Titian's birthplace, and the scholarship of earlier Venetians, Celso Fabbro and Clemente Gandini, who produced an earlier edition of letters in 1977. Their previous edition was just a beginning. Many of the letters in this book are previously unpublished. The corpus is larger than expected, numbering 279 and dating from 1513 to 1576. The letters include all those signed by Titian, many that were addressed to him, and those that once existed and can be reconstructed in a fragmentary way from other documentation. Most tantalizing are the missing letters from Alfonso d'Este to Titian from 1518, with instructions about the subject matter of the Camerino in Ferrara, described in Titian's replies as "tanto bella e ingenua." Titian himself must have been careless about how he kept his own archive, and Alfonso, unlike his sister Isabella, can have not kept *copialelettere*. Some that survived appeared in publications by Ludovico Dolce and Carlo Ridolfi. There is also a list of false documents, mostly receipts. Critical notes accompany each letter. Puppi knows just how much to give us in his commentaries. There is an authoritative sparseness, concentrating on significant literature. As Puppi states, he is primarily concerned with documenting the pictorial activity of Titian, his relationship with his patrons, and the activities of his workshop, rather than presenting a psychological portrait of Titian, or an analysis of his language. This can now be left to others. The first letters, better defined as petitions, from May 1513 and November 1514, are addressed to Leonardo Loredan, Doge of Venice and to the Council of Ten, and manifest Titian's desire to succeed Giovanni Bellini as the principal painter to the Venetian Republic and as the holder of the *sanseria* of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. The last letters are to Titian's Spanish patrons. Of the many letters produced here it is not surprising that Pietro Aretino's letters about Titian are the most fluent and elegant in literary style. Aretino created a celebrity culture around himself, Titian, and other Venetians that resounds with us today. He writes in a style that is confident and amusing, one that never fails to entertain.

Since Charles Hope received his doctorate in 1975 many of his colleagues have awaited the publication of Titian documents contained in that thesis. Hope has contributed generously to this edition with advice and information about unpublished material. Hope writes an extremely interesting short postscript on the attribution of the letters, "La paternità delle lettere di Tiziano." In the past art historians have concentrated on the attribution of paintings, but now the attribution of texts is of equal importance. In 1944, Erica Tietze-Conrat first suggested that not all the letters signed by Titian were in fact written in his own handwriting. According to Hope, only ten or eleven are actually written by his hand. Those that are in Titian's distinctive handwriting are, with one exception,

written from outside Venice, some to relatives and to patrons of lesser importance. In these letters, Hope describes Titian's style as direct and crude. Groups of letters with Titian's signature are ascribed, on the basis of handwriting, by Hope to Leoni Leone, Andrea Navagero, Giovanni Maria Verdizotti, and of course to Aretino. (The handwriting on many is unknown.) Tietze-Conrat attributed a letter of 22 June 1527 to Aretino, an attribution with which Hope agrees. Hope creates a group of seven from around 1530 to 1531, all addressed to Federico Gonzaga, Isabella d'Este's son, and all in Aretino's hand. The only difficulty is that they do not read like Aretino's fluent style in his famous collections of letters. Hope is reticent about the circumstances in which Titian's letters were created, when they survive in the handwriting of others. Did Titian give general instructions to his friends as to what to say, which were then given in improved Italian? Can we interpret these letters as indicative of Titian's intentions? Do we see the input of Aretino in the complex relations between Titian and Isabella d'Este's son, Federico Gonzaga? This edition of Titian's correspondence presents all that is known about Titian's letters to date, but also opens up a host of interesting questions about his patronage and way of operating as an artist, which will preoccupy future generations of scholars.

JAYNIE ANDERSON

The University of Melbourne