The Court Artist in Seventeenth-Century Italy. Elena Fumagalli and Raffaella Morselli, eds.
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What did Giambologna, Jan Kraeck, and Domenichino have in common? All of them were, at some point in their lives, court artists, in Florence, Turin, and Rome, respectively. But what exactly did "court artist" mean in Italy during the seventeenth century? This volume, which results from a one-day conference held in Florence in 2012, aims to answer this question.

A methodological introduction by Elena Fumagalli and Raffaella Morselli sets the topic in a critical perspective and is followed by six essays dedicated to outstanding Italian courts of the seventeenth century, including Rome, Urbino, Florence, Modena, Mantova, and Turin. In order to outline a general portrait of the court artist, Fumagalli and Morselli asked the contributors to investigate the same set of issues. Thus each essay considers the nature of the relationship that bound a court artist to his or her patron, highlighting how this bond was always characterized by a high degree of

familiarity and exclusivity. Such relationships often lasted for a lifetime and sometimes were also transmitted from one generation to the next, from father to son. There were, however, important exceptions. While, for example, court artists enjoyed a stable fortune in Florence and Mantua, where they were in general able to maintain their position also after their patron's death, Patrizia Cavazzini points out that in Rome a newly elected pontiff usually dismissed his predecessor's court artists and appointed new ones. Particular attention has been devoted to analyzing the terminology used to refer to court artists in archival material, as well as to explaining how they were paid. All contributions predictably highlight that one of the main characteristics that differentiated court artists from other artists active at court was that they were included among the *salariati*. This means that their work was remunerated with a monthly salary, to which, in most cases, food and lodging were added.

That each essay shares a set of topics undoubtedly gives consistency to the volume; it also creates some sense of repetitiveness, reinforced by the fact that, while some contributions analyze the topic in a critical way and problematize the data emerging from the archival material, others mostly provide a list of court artists' names in chronological order. These essays undoubtedly add new, useful information, but their contribution to the overall aim of the book — to explain how "the relation between the needs of the court and the artists employed there changed profoundly, starting with the very nature of the work they were asked to performed" (11) — is limited. Perhaps they would have benefited from a deeper reflection on what has already been achieved in this area of research by seminal works such as Martin Warnke's *The Court Artist: On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist* (1993), which is only mentioned in the introduction and in a couple of essays, and, although for an earlier period, Stephen Campbell's edited volume *Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300–1550* (2004).

One of the strengths of this book is that each essay is grounded on a considerable amount of new archival material, which is discussed in detail. Moreover, it sheds light not only on the figure of the court artist, but also on the role played at court by other groups of artists, such as those who worked for a patron on a temporary basis and/or on specific projects. As such, this edited volume enriches our knowledge of artistic production in seventeenth-century Italian courts.

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