

**Malcolm Campbell, *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace*.  
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201 illus., \$45.00**

**David McTavish**

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divi was often unreliable in his facts, but more seriously, he was limited by his adulation of Michelangelo and by a lack of an analytical bent (in the preface to the reader Condivi characterizes himself as 'a diligent and faithful collector'). Wohl rightly points out that Condivi was even more hampered by what material Michelangelo chose to give to him. Yet it is just this controlling factor on Michelangelo's part that gives the text its value as a source for his life. Confession and self-justification were powerful factors in Michelangelo's use of Condivi's *Vita* to ensure a certain record of his life. Both the legendary and human aspects of the artist emerge in Condivi's narrative, including the famous tale of Michelangelo imbibing his propensity for sculpture from his wet nurse, the wife of a stonemason; and the frustration experienced by the artist over the 'tragedy' of the tomb of Julius II, which went through numerous changes and contracts as Michelangelo was torn between his powerful patrons.

In discussing Condivi's text, Wohl comments perceptively on its relationship to Vasari's first version of the life of Michelangelo written in 1550, which was the account in need of correction mentioned obliquely by Condivi in his preface. While Vasari's superior skills as an artist and art historian are reflected in his biography of Michelangelo, Condivi's text, although less objective and analytical, reflects a personal statement on and by the 'prince of the art of *disegno*' who dominated the sixteenth-century art world.

BARBARA DODGE  
York University  
Toronto

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MALCOLM CAMPBELL *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977. 306 + xviii pp., 201 illus., \$45.00.

The critical situation has changed considerably since 1958, when

Rudolf Wittkower remarked that Pietro da Cortona, in contrast to Bernini and Borromini, had still to be given back his eminent position among the outstanding artists of the seventeenth century. Briganti's monograph of 1962, as well as Noehles's studies on Cortona's architecture and Vitzthum's publications on various aspects of the drawings and subject matter, among others, have done much to restore the artist to his rightful position. Nevertheless, in the English-speaking world, at least, the genius of Pietro da Cortona remains relatively obscure. No doubt this is largely due to the fact that Cortona's finest works are still *in situ* and, as with most great decorations, must be witnessed to be appreciated fully. Yet even the Pitti Palace, which possesses Cortona's most extensive decorations, offers such a treasury of great paintings on the walls that the frescoes and stuccoes on the ceiling are all too easily neglected. In recent years, however, the authorities have done everything to overcome this: suitable lighting of the frescoes has now been installed, and the progress of the visitor through the apartments has been made to correspond to seventeenth-century practice.

Malcolm Campbell's book, devoted to these very rooms, has experienced a long gestation. Growing out of a thesis presented at Princeton in the early 1960s, the book also incorporates the material of Campbell's catalogue of 1965 to an exhibition of Cortona's drawings from the Uffizi. As an art historical study, *Pietro da Cortona at the Pitti Palace* forms a natural sequel to John Rupert Martin's *The Farnese Gallery* (Princeton, 1965), and is indeed organized along roughly similar lines. (The major difference is that Campbell's book includes a lengthy catalogue of documents.) The subject, of course, lends itself to similar treatment: in each, a crucial seventeenth-century secular decoration is under consideration – one of the early Roman seicento, the other of the High Baroque. And just as Annibale Carracci's

Camerino in the Palazzo Farnese precedes his Galleria, so Pietro's Sala della Stufa in the Palazzo Pitti precedes the Planetary Rooms. In both books the patron and his family, and the great palace in which they reside, are rightly accorded major roles; and in both special attention is given to the significance of the individual decorations for the development of seventeenth-century style as a whole. Tellingly, Martin ends his central discussion with the heading 'The Farnese Gallery and the Baroque,' Campbell with 'The Pitti Palace Decorations and the Baroque.'

Comparison of the two books is thus almost inevitable but is not always relevant: suffice it to say that in this company Campbell's book often seems unnecessarily cumbersome. Perhaps if the author had first offered some of his more intricate arguments – such as that concerning the subject of the Sala della Stufa – in article form, his book would have been relieved of some of its more unwieldy sections. But another remedy would be needed for its well-meaning pedantry. Is the reader of this sort of book likely to require a footnote (p. 7) locating reproductions of the Farnese Gallery ceiling?

Although a native of Tuscany, Pietro da Cortona had made his reputation entirely in Rome. Even his presence in Florence in 1637 – when he first received a commission to work in the Palazzo Pitti – was merely by chance. Then engaged by the Pope's family, the Barberini, to decorate the enormous Salone ceiling of their Roman palace, Cortona had expressed a desire to experience Venetian painting at first hand, and towards that end had travelled northward in the entourage of Cardinal Giulio Sacchetti. The latter had stopped in Florence to witness the festivities marking the consummation of the marriage of Grand Duke Ferdinand II and Princess Vittoria della Rovere – an event that will assume further significance in its connection with the subject of the Pitti Palace frescoes – and at that



time the artist was persuaded to stay on in the city.

Within a month he was at work in the Palazzo Pitti, frescoing the walls of a small room known as the Sala della Stufa. The finished work, one of Cortona's most enchanting creations, constituted a novelty in Florence: it introduced the full flower of the Roman Baroque into her midst. Elsewhere, the level of painting in the city was not high, and had in fact been generally at a low ebb since the time when the Medici (in the person of Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo I) had acquired the Pitti Palace in 1550. True, a major campaign of decorative painting had been initiated by Ferdinand II in the 1630s, but by the end of 1636 his most competent decorator, Giovanni da San Giovanni, had already died, as had his grandmother, Cristina of Lorraine, who doubtless held Medici patronage in close check. The way was now clear for new developments.

During the summer of 1637, Pietro da Cortona completed *The Age of Silver* and *The Age of Gold* (Fig. 1) on one wall of the Sala della Stufa. He then returned to Rome to finish the ceiling of the Palazzo Barberini, but in 1641 was back in Florence where he stayed until 1647. With the rapid execution of the paintings devoted to the two other Ovidian Ages, those of



FIGURE 1. Pietro da Cortona, *The Age of Gold*. Campbell, fig. 2.

Bronze and Iron, Cortona's decoration in the Sala della Stufa was brought to a conclusion. What sense it was then intended to convey has, however, been the subject of spirited discussion. Early biographers claim that the subject was the responsibility of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, but the programme itself has never been located. The frescoes were consistently called 'The Four Ages' in the seventeenth century. But as Walter Vitzthum first noted in print (*Burlington Magazine*, CIV [1962], 121), *The Age of Gold* includes clear references both to the new bride – in the form of the figure with the laurel wreath (*vittoria*) and the oak (*rovere*) – and to Florence – in the form of the lion (*marzocco*). If the four frescoes are read in the Ovidian sense, the series inevitably ends in the rape and desecration of *The Age of Iron*, but if reversed it culminates in the peace and plenty of *The Age of Gold*. This, coupled with the identifications made in the latter fresco, led Vitzthum to conclude that the room celebrated the Medici-Rovere union as the 'Return of the Golden Age.'

Campbell brings ample evidence to support such a conclusion, although he shifts the emphasis from his previous belief that the young couple themselves are ideally portrayed in *The Age of Gold* to the notion that what is symbolically depicted is the anticipated birth of a male heir. Ultimately, however, Campbell accords only secondary significance to this reading, and opts for having it both ways: 'the primary theme of the cycle is the Four Ages of Man as recounted by Ovid and the Return of the Golden Age as described by Virgil is the secondary theme of the cycle' (p. 46).

Cortona's shift from work in the Sala della Stufa to that in the five rooms across the front of the Pitti Palace evidently occurred quickly and effortlessly. Each room in this *enfilade*, although of varying dimensions, was larger and grander than the Sala della Stufa, and the majority were used, moreover, on formal occasions. Such importance de-

manded commensurate artistic enrichment, and this Cortona amply supplied, augmenting fresco with stucco in a series of virtuoso performances. Here only the ceilings were decorated, the walls for the most part being hung with tapestries, not the tiered paintings of today's Galleria Palatina. Executed at a time when Florence was again witnessing remarkable artistic activity, with Salvator Rosa, Gaspar Dughet, and Justus Sustermans all in attendance, the sumptuous ceilings exercised a profound influence on subsequent princely decoration, most notably at Versailles, as the late Walter Vitzthum of the University of Toronto liked to expound, but did not live long enough to publish in detail.

The rooms themselves were dedicated to the planetary deities and are arranged according to Ptolemaic cosmology – first Venus, then Apollo (for the sun), Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. At the same time, Campbell discerns a progression through the rooms that refers to the education of a prince, to be equated no doubt with the expectations for Ferdinand and Vittoria's son, Cosimo III – FRVCTVS VICTORIAE FELICITAS.

Cortona stayed in Florence only long enough to complete three of the five rooms. The other two were completed by his pupil Ciro Ferri, although the exact extent of his contribution has remained problematical. From scrutiny of the relevant documents and the preliminary drawings Campbell has drawn the following conclusions: the Sala di Apollo, left unfinished by Cortona in 1647, was completed by Ferri between 1659 and 1661 with cartoons prepared in Rome by himself, under Cortona's supervision, whereas an earlier set of cartoons by the master had been left in Florence in 1647; and the Sala di Saturno was executed entirely by Ferri in 1663-65, from his own cartoons, while Cortona had some hand in the design of the room's stucco decoration.

The book concludes with three substantial appendices. The first involves a detailed examination of



the chronology of the execution of the Planetary Rooms. The second consists of a 'Document Catalogue,' which, going much beyond Geisenheimer's archival findings of 1909, provides a rich source of new information. The third is the 'Catalogue of Drawings.' Campbell expresses the hope, and expectation, that new drawings will come to light, and a new one in the Gabinetto Nazionale, Rome, has indeed turned up within the last year (*Disegni di Pietro da Cortona e Ciro Ferri*, Rome, 1977, no. 8).

Curiously, a figure study in the Uffizi published ten years ago (*Disegni Italiani della Collezione Santarelli*, Florence, 1967, p. 71, fig. 80; and again *Burlington Magazine*, CIX [1967], 108), and associated by Maria Fossi Todorow with the early stages of the design of the Sala di Venere (a subject considered in detail by Campbell) is absent altogether from his list. In discussing the related compositional drawing in Budapest, Campbell comments that the sheet appears not 'to have produced any progeny' (p. 96, n. 104), which makes the Santarelli drawing a very neglected child indeed.

In contrast to Martin's *Farnese Gallery*, only a selection of the related drawings is reproduced in Campbell's *Pitti Palace*. A great number not reproduced are of course readily available in the same author's Uffizi catalogue, but others (e.g. cat. no. 50) are reasonably new to the literature, and to the literature not specially on Cortona at that. To reproduce only those drawings related to the arguments of the text provides support for those arguments, but deprives the reader the full means of constructing others. On the other hand, the many reproductions of details of the decorations and of related projects are very welcome, even if the matte finish, much favoured by Princeton University Press, produces a singularly deadening effect.

Closer to home, the painting in the Art Gallery of Ontario of *Antiochus and Stratonice*, which made a rare appearance in the recent *Heroes and Heroines* exhibition, is

not 'unattributed' as Campbell states but is given to the Austrian artist in Italy, Daniel Seiter. His name and the date 1680 were discovered on the back of the old canvas when the painting was re-lined in 1959. This information was published by no less an authority than Stechow in the *Art Gallery of Toronto News and Notes* (VI [1962]), but that it was overlooked merely points out the difficulties in retrieving information from such ephemera. That Stechow repeated the same material in the *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* (V [1964], 1 ff.) only underlines the situation.

DAVID MCTAVISH  
Queen's University  
Kingston

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DERIC REGIN *Traders, Artists, Burgers: A Cultural History of Amsterdam in the 17th Century*. Amsterdam, Van Gorcum, 1976. 214 pp., 8 illus.

In his foreword, the author clearly sets out his purposes and methods: 'The present work narrates the development of the first autonomous bourgeois culture in modern history. Relying chiefly on original sources of art, architecture, literature, pamphlets, diaries, sermons, letters, contemporary travel reports, as well as archival documents, I have attempted to synthesize the multifarious aspects of seventeenth century Amsterdam in a historical perspective.'

'In addition to the descriptive task,' Regin continues, 'I have . . . tried to analyse the notion of the bourgeois culture *in essence*. . . . The question will be raised, what the constituent factors were that made for the bourgeois era. How within an age, dominated by courtly grandeur, did Amsterdam become an isolated center of intimate Baroque? Under what conditions did it emerge, and why was its cultural eminence so short-lived? What were the reasons for its lapse into comfortable elegance, as its authentic burgher style faded?'

The history of the city is examined at 'pivotal dates', 1578, 1603, 1617, 1642, 1650, and 1697. In the course of his examination, Regin makes use of a great deal of Dutch literature. For those who cannot read the language of Vondel in the original, Regin's book provides many treats in the form of translations. There are, for example, Jeremias de Decker's lines on the *Beurs* (the Stock Exchange, Fig. 1):

Here rises upward from the Amstel's depth a place  
Where many people mill around on afternoons,  
A park, where Moors can trade with Scandinavians,  
A church, where Jew and Turk and Christian come together. (p. 98)

Or there is Vondel's majestic rendering of the opening of the 137th Psalm:

When shackled each day more in Babylon we grieved,  
Hung up our harps on willow trees, that cast green-leaved,  
Their shadows on the never reconciled Euphrates. (p. 65)

There are the splendid debunking lines of young Focquenbroch (who died at the age of thirty-three in Africa), supposedly eulogizing ancient times:

Thou old venerable wonders . . .  
How can one see thy treasure eaten by Time's kiss,  
Where once thy glory shone, there dogs now come to piss. (p. 56)

And there are the many quotations from popular lyrics.

Thus the relationship between Dutch literature and Amsterdam is superbly explored. But when it comes to art, it is a different matter. 'It is an embarrassing commentary,'



FIGURE 1. The *Beurs*, Amsterdam. Regin, pl. 5.