

Michael W. Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture*. Cambridge, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2002, 246 pp., 8 colour, 58 black-and-white illus., \$121.95 Cdn, ISBN 0-521-81321-2

Margaret A. Gallucci, *Benvenuto Cellini. Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy*. New York, N.Y., Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 214 pp., 16 black-and-white illus., \$95.95 Cdn, ISBN 1-4039-6107-7, paperback, \$30.95 Cdn, ISBN 1-4039-6896-9

Alessandro Nova and Anna Schreurs, eds, *Benvenuto Cellini. Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*. Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 2003, 413 pp., 228 black-and-white illus., €64, ISBN 3-412-11002-7

Gwendolyn Trottein

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Harris's last two chapters, "Avant-Garde and Front Populaire" and "Beware of Domestic Objects: Vocation and Equivocation in 1936," present closer analyses of surrealist objects. In the first, an extended discussion of Claude Cahun's *Objet*, 1936, as both a political (its text made a clear reference to the political climate of the 1930s in France) and psychical (it dealt with issues of sexuality and gender) refusal of the symbolic order supports his suggestion that in the 1930s the surrealist object functioned as a way for the movement to supersede traditional categories of art. In the second, Harris examines the 1936 *Exposition surréaliste d'objets* as both the theoretical and actual site of a struggle between Dalí's paranoia-criticism and Breton's automatism, two strategies to "reconcile subject and object" (p. 194). This last chapter is most interesting when Harris again raises the question of sexual difference and refusal, reading the image of the "castrating" praying mantis, "an object of fascination for all the surrealists," in the work of both Dalí and Breton and Jacqueline Lamba (p. 212). While it acknowledges the misogynistic tendencies in surrealism, in its complexity Harris's reading offers alternative analyses of gender in surrealism, particularly the "femme fatale" image of the praying mantis or Medusa head as disrupting patriarchal culture.

It is difficult to find fault with Harris's book, for it makes a significant contribution to the understanding of how and why surrealism changed in the 1930s. Harris's analysis is particularly strong because it avoids reducing internal conflict to a battle of personalities, which is so often the case in histories of surrealism; instead, he carefully examines the differences in ideas and aims of the movement's members and describes how those who left the surrealist movement continued cultural and political work in other arenas. His only oversight is to not fully acknowledge and explore the scientific method that was part of the

surrealist movement from its beginning. The first issues of *La Révolution surréaliste* were, after all, produced by a collective in the Bureau de recherches surréalistes, which was conceived as a kind of artistic and intellectual think tank.

While Malt and Harris cover some of the same territory, they do so differently. Whether we think of surrealist objects as political in themselves, or as responding to the political and surrealist climate of their historical moment, the work of both scholars is valuable for its re-examination of surrealism as a revolutionary political movement.

LINDA STEER

Binghamton University

#### Notes

- 1 Louis Aragon et al., "Declaration of January 27, 1925," in "Famous Manifestoes and Documents," *History of Surrealism*, ed. Maurice Nadeau, trans. Richard Howard (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 240.
- 2 Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss, eds, *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT., 2003), 7. While a discussion of market forces influencing the value of surrealist works of art is not the point here, LaCoss and Spiteri's observation is interesting in the era of the sale of the contents of André Breton's Paris studio, which were auctioned at CalmelsCohen in 2003. *La Mélancolie extatique des chiens, gâteuse comme une vertigineuse descente en ski*, 1931–32, a collaged postcard by Salvador Dalí, for example, sold for €200,000. See Lot 4017, *André Breton, 42 rue Fontaine*, available at [http://breton.calmelscohen.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=recherche.lot&lot\\_id=4017&cat\\_id=3](http://breton.calmelscohen.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=recherche.lot&lot_id=4017&cat_id=3)
- 3 Louis Aragon, quoted in Simon Watson Taylor, "Introduction," in Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (1971; Boston, 1994), xi.

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The past five years have been exciting and eventful ones for art historians interested in the sixteenth-century Florentine goldsmith, sculptor, and writer Benvenuto Cellini. His name is now well on its way to becoming, if not like Machiavelli, Michelangelo, or Leonardo, a household word, at least like Castiglione, a classroom word. Cellini was a largely forgotten figure until the nineteenth century when new publications and translations of his autobiography provoked a flurry of artistic activity. Stendhal passed a *nuît blanche* reading it, Berlioz set it to music in his opera of 1838, the elder Dumas wrote its sequel with his *Ascanio*, and a number of painters recreated its more dramatic scenes in oils.

Despite Cellini's literary notoriety, until very recently his plastic oeuvre has been the object of comparatively little study, partly because much of it has been lost and partly because

extant works were classed under the rubric “mannerist,” which ensured quick dismissal. Although the golden *Saltcellar for Francis I* served as a textbook example of courtly mannerism, the artist’s jewelry and sculpture were scarcely examined from other points of view (for example, iconographic) until the 1980s. Eugène Plon had produced in 1883 a rather unrealistically large catalogue of Cellini’s works integrated into a biographical study that was definitive until 1981 when Charles Avery and Susanna Barbaglia produced *L’opera completa del Cellini*, published by Rizzoli. Following Plon’s model of a biographical *catalogue raisonné*, John Pope-Hennessy published in 1985 a richly illustrated monograph, which came out also in French translation. Although by the 1940s Cellini’s autobiography, the *Vita*, was a classic to the point of having become a Book of the Month selection illustrated by Salvador Dalí, as well as a *Classics Illustrated* comic book, it nevertheless mostly escaped the attention of new schools of literary and historical criticism.

All this has changed and Cellini studies have come of age: the year 2000 marked the 500th anniversary of the artist’s birth in 1500 and the unveiling of his restored *Perseus and the Medusa* in Florence’s most historic piazza. Colloquia, held in honour of the artist in Florence, Frankfurt, London, and New York, have resulted already in the publication of two volumes of collected articles, one of which is reviewed below. Since then Cellini’s wax model for the *Perseus* has undergone restoration, his life has become the subject of an off-Broadway play, his bronze bust of Aldo Bindoviti has been the focus of a “one-work” show in Boston, and his *Saltcellar* has enjoyed the dubious honour of being stolen from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Michael Cole’s *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture* was the first of the new monographs by younger scholars to appear in print. This elegantly phrased and richly documented analysis focuses on Cellini’s practice and theory of sculpture as its title indicates. Cleverly constructed upon the notion of substance in sculpture, the book’s organization respects the chronology of Cellini’s career and the production of his major extant works without pretending to be a biography or a catalogue. Chapter one is thus devoted to salt and gold, the gold of Cellini’s *Saltcellar for Francis I* (1540–43) and the salt it was designed to hold. Chapter two deals with bronze as a medium and with bronze casting, particularly in the creation of Cellini’s figural group of *Perseus and the Medusa* (1545–54). Cellini’s belated foray into marble carving is explored in chapter three, especially his execution of an *Apollo and Hyacinth* (1548), now in the Bargello in Florence. Chapter four takes up the question of the role of a less “material” art form within Cellini’s sculptural corpus, that of drawing, in its examination of the bronze relief added to the parapet under the base of the *Perseus and the Medusa* and his drawings for the Accademia seal. The final and concluding chapter of Cole’s book is devoted to the afterlife in

Florence and elsewhere of Cellini’s sculpture and his understanding of the sculptural act.

Mastery of the medium is often the message extricated from this series of key works placed under the scientific lenses of Aristotle, Georgius Agricola, Vannoccio Biringuccio, Giambattista Della Porta, as well as of Cellini himself. Cellini’s more technical *Trattati* of the 1560s serve as important sources. But Cole also uses Cellini’s poetry, a relatively untapped (and untranslated) source, to elucidate the more arcane aspects of Cellini’s imagery. A new sort of hero emerges from this monograph, an ingenious professional possessing an almost mystical fervour for the art forms he practises and the materials they transform. Salt is thus a miraculous substance linked to the male figure of the Sea atop the *Saltcellar*, whose history and properties Cellini exploits in order to demonstrate his own intelligence in the creation of a polysemous piece capable of provoking learned table talk. And it is the bronze of Cellini’s *Perseus* that causes it to triumph over its stone predecessors “because the blood of the medium implies a state of life that marble cannot, and because a calculated circuit of mythical birth and death provides for it a spirit that marble, in its face, can only lose” (p. 70).

In a highly sophisticated version of the children’s game of scissors, rock, and paper, hard metal was overcome by soft rock when Cellini turned his talents to marble. Concluding his analysis of the *Apollo and Hyacinth*, Cole affirms: “The *Apollo* is a polemical work, and its polemic is bent on proving Cellini’s knowledge and control of the medium that threatened to isolate his sculptural domain” (p. 85). Marble in turn gives way to the flatter forms of art, to *disegno*, in the *Liberation of Andromeda* relief and in the proposals for a seal representing the Accademia del Disegno (1563). According to Cole, Cellinian *disegno* differs from Vasarian as it is less a Platonic uplifting toward the ideal and more an Aristotelian investing of the real – of conduct including art-making – with cause, purpose, and meaning, with *telos*. “*Disegno* was, for him [Cellini], not the end of knowledge, but the means to virtue; it made his art significant not just as a form or idea, but as a work” (p. 121). Conceiving of *disegno* as the means to virtue imbues sculpture and the act of sculpting with an ethical dimension that transcends any solely aesthetic or narrowly political content.

As the impetus toward, and the enabling concept behind, the creation of virtuous and intrinsically ethical sculpture, Cellini’s *disegno* is nevertheless closer to Vasari’s more platonizing *disegno* than it first seemed. The fury personified in the naked figure in the *Liberation of Andromeda* burns with a sacred fire linked to Michelangelo’s *furia* and to Cellini’s solar vision in prison: “To make the wax *disegno* [model of the crucified Christ in wax] was to have contact with the divine, to act with the light of Heaven, and to defeat the fury of his tormentors” (p. 146).

The Florentine Loggia dei Lanzi, suspected for some time of harbouring a less noble, a more selfish and gendered *Perseus*, is acquitted of any wrongdoing. Writes Cole: “As he [Cellini] conceived a picture of virtue for his city, each of its terms gave his own action an example, until *Perseus*’s virtuous work became Cellini’s artistic design, the cause behind his own imitation” (p. 148).

One might long for more vice and less virtue in Cole’s treatment of Cellini’s sculpture and its underlying principles, particularly as the artist’s autobiography seems to define *virtù* in a way that sets it at odds with the theological virtues of his day, but the fact remains that *Principles* is a beautiful and exceedingly erudite book. Its reliance on sources other than the *Vita* to explicate Cellini’s sculpture, on Cellini’s later technical and poetic writings, and on texts of his contemporaries helps to erase any vestige of the nineteenth-century rogue from Cellini’s legacy, rendering it thus more institutional, and in contemporary terms more palatable.

Margaret A. Gallucci’s *Benvenuto Cellini. Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy* is in many respects complementary to Cole’s *Principles of Sculpture*, for it focuses not on the sculptor, the professional Cellini, but the amateur, the literary Cellini, that of the *Vita* and the poems. In contrast to Cole, she investigates, from the standpoint of sixteenth-century manners and mores and without romanticizing, the shadowy and unrepentant faces of Cellini, those of duellist, murderer, litigant, necromancer, whoremonger, sadist, syphilitic, and literary renegade, that seem to emerge both from his autobiographical adventure narrative and bawdy *rime*. Gallucci taps a wide and varied body of contemporary and secondary sources in an effort to avoid anachronism in repositioning the writer-artist in a broader and more comprehensive historical context. She emphasizes the triply transgressive nature of Cellini’s life and work in three areas – sexual, literary, artistic – using archival material to examine the exact nature of the sexual crimes of which Cellini was accused and convicted, and his poetry and autobiography to examine his artistic propensity toward the breaking of rules and the violation of established canons.

Chapter one of *Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy* situates Cellini’s life and artistic career historically; chapter two identifies a defensive legal register in Cellini’s autobiography that can be related to other Renaissance apologies; and chapter three studies the sonnet as a site for the passing of artistic judgments in Cellini’s day and considers the stylistic registers of his poetry, which range from the lyrical to the burlesque. Chapter four considers the influence of varied genres – medieval vision narrative, ekphrastic writing, epic, romance, and theatrical comedy – in Cellini’s written work to show how pastiches of these genres violate its literary purity,

while chapter five focuses on honour and manliness in Cellini’s work and times in an attempt to isolate transgressive behaviour historically.

Gallucci’s groundbreaking discussions on the legal aspects of sodomy, a problem avoided by all but a few Cellini scholars (Paolo Rossi, for example) are of particular interest to scholars seeking to separate the historical man from his autobiographical persona. Cellini was a convicted sodomite who spent four of the later years of his life under house arrest for this offense. It was during those years that he began his memoirs and sculpted from a single block of white marble the life-sized Christ on the Cross that now hangs in the Escorial, and whose vision, according to the *Vita*, he was blessed with during a previous incarceration.

Equally important to the renewing of Cellini studies is Gallucci’s singling out of the earthy, anti-Petrarchan qualities of the artist’s poetry, which serves to open discussion on Renaissance art and parody, a potentially rich terrain usually left fallow by an art history respectful of the high seriousness of great art and artists. However, following belatedly the lead of Paul Barolsky, researchers are beginning to take note of the irony intended in much Renaissance painting and sculpture, as will Patricia Reilly in her forthcoming book on Vasari and the vernacular of art, which contains a chapter on Cellini.

Those seeking a more precise understanding of the nature of Cellini’s misogyny, which is a striking characteristic of his self-portrait for contemporary readers of the *Vita*, will find the chapter on male codes of honour particularly valuable. Cellini’s self-presentation as “violent braggart” is explained within the larger field of cinquecento masculine behaviour, a move that in some sense disculpates the author of the *Vita*. Although it argues for a willfully transgressive Cellini, *Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity* reconstructs lost moral codes, a process that paradoxically relativizes the apparent immorality of Cellini’s conduct and its translation into art, providing thus a point of contact and agreement between Cole’s and Gallucci’s studies, despite the difference in their orientations.

These recent approaches to Cellini’s oeuvre are satisfying in their attempt to combine the self-fashioning writer with the virtuoso artist and to do so from multiple points of view. A similar, laudable objective is evidenced by Angela Biancofiore’s recent literary study *Benvenuto Cellini artiste-écrivain: l’homme à l’œuvre* (Paris, 1998), which contains a chapter on his aesthetics of plastic art. As its title indicates, Margaret Gallucci and Paolo Rossi’s *Benvenuto Cellini: Sculptor, Goldsmith, Writer* (Cambridge, 2004), an anthology of articles by historians of both art and literature, takes an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to Cellini’s oeuvre, as will Victoria Gardner Coates’s forthcoming book on Cellini’s art and autobiography, and my own (Paris, 2006).

Perhaps the most varied and international set of responses

to Cellini's artistry to appear recently is found in *Benvenuto Cellini. Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert*, edited by Alessandro Nova and Anna Schreurs. Eighteen scholars from two continents contributed to this volume, a collection of articles in German, Italian, and English, based on the proceedings of a notable conference, the *Kongress zum 500. Geburtstag Cellinis*, which was held in November 2000 in the sumptuous surroundings of Frankfurt's sculpture museum, the Liebighaus. The conference, like the book it spawned, was devoted to the two-fold objective of distinguishing the historical artist from his fictionalized self and the re-evaluation of this problematical figure in the art theoretical debates of his age.

The individual chapters of the book are grouped into an introduction, five main sections, and a conclusion, which treat successively: Cellini's sketches for family arms and for the "arms" of the Accademia del Disegno; his drawing and sculptural technique; his place in the *paragone* debate of the time; the reception of the Antique as related to his art; and his biography and autobiography. As an ensemble, the volume is strongly theoretical in orientation, most especially the essays of the German scholars, a number of whom are quite renowned in their fields. Although the outline that follows fails to do critical justice to a host of complex, individual contributions, nonetheless it attempts to furnish the reader, section by section, with at least a sketchy notion of the volume's contents.

In the introductory essay, the late John Shearman reopens his dossier on reception in the Piazza della Signoria to demonstrate that the aesthetization of the subjects of Cellini's and Gianbologna's statues for the Loggia was in itself a political move, since Duke Cosimo and his artists had learned from experience just how adept Florentines were at imposing their own political messages on public statuary. Hence the answer to the question of his title, "Art or Politics in the Piazza?" is a highly nuanced "yes" on both counts.

In the first iconographic analysis of Cellini's drawing of the family arms, Michael Cole explores the artist's social aspirations and the connection between weapons and artists' tools. Victoria von Flemming and Daniela Bohde look at Cellini's five drawings for an official seal (ca. 1563) for the newly formed Accademia del Disegno, but from differing perspectives, one focusing on Diana-Natura and a neo-platonic concept of *phantasia* and the other on Apollo and Titian's poetic concept of *disegno*.

Using finely honed connoisseur's skills, Alexander Perrig renews his now classic, but still *minoritaire*, argument that a group of drawings housed in the Louvre were those left by Cellini to his Parisian workshop when he returned to Florence in 1545. Marco Collareta exposes the strategies used to enhance or to downplay the importance of the art of goldsmithery in the two editions of Vasari's *Lives* and in Cellini's *Vita*. Metal casting is also at the heart of Cristina Acidini Luchinat's concerns: using

a number of impressive shots taken at varying stages of the project, she covers the recent restoration of the *Perseus*, an endeavour which lasted three years and required the removal of the immense bronze from its traditional location to the shelter of the neighbouring Uffizi.

The *paragone* debate over the relative merits of different forms of art in which Cellini was actively engaged at mid-century is evoked by Alessandro Nova, who argues convincingly that works such as Perino del Vaga's frescoes in the Castel Sant'Angelo are painted examples of Leonardo's written arguments. Stefan Morét presents Cellini's and others' attempts to translate into monumental form the theoretical superiority of sculpture, an art form deemed more difficult because conceived to be viewed from a great number of angles. Inquiry into Cellini's theory of multiple viewpoints for free-standing works of sculpture is furthered and deepened by Raphael Rosenberg's analysis of Michelangelo's studies for a pendant to the *David*.

Chapter five assesses the varying stances vis-à-vis classical antiquity adopted by Cellini and some of his contemporaries. Referring to Montorsoli's tomb for Jacopo Sannazaro in Naples, Tanja Michalsky argues for a christianized reception of pagan forms. The peregrinations of Baccio Bandinelli's copy of the *Laocoön* and its changing political significance during the pontificates of Leo X and Clement VII are traced by Wolfgang Liebenwein. Anna Schreurs compares Cellini's relationship to antiquity to that of the artist and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio. Ligorio's more academic and literary approach to the ancients demands first the accurate reconstruction of antique works, then imitation and even veneration of them, whereas Cellini's written references to antiquity are characterized by irony, casualness, self-confidence, and independence. In light of the chapter's preoccupations, however, more emphasis might have been accorded both Cellini's sculptural restoration of an antique marble torso and his account of this impassioned encounter between fragment and artist in the *Vita*.

Paolo L. Rossi takes the first serious look at the difference between and the complex histories of the two editions of Cellini's *Trattati*, which were styled as "gifts" to Medici princes. Using two seemingly unrelated passages from the *Vita*, Gerhard Wolf links Cellini's *Narcissus* to his *Perseus* because both thematize the mirror and the mirror image. For Horst Bredekamp, *Perseus* is the product of symbolic acts of murder; its violence proclaims both its patron, the absolutist duke of Florence, and its creator, Cellini, to be above the law. Victor Stoichita studies statues and their doppelgangers, theorizing the interplay between reality and fiction which characterizes equally Cellini's *Vita* and his *Nymph of Fontainebleau*.

Klaus Herding's long essay on the later fortunes of Cellini's work, especially its reception in the age of Goethe, serves as the concluding chapter of *Benvenuto Cellini, Kunst und Kunsttheorie*

im 16. Jahrhundert. Nova and Schreurs's is a heavy tome, in terms both of real size and weight and of figurative depth and breadth; as such it serves as an admirable reminder that scholars of the Italian Renaissance can ill afford to ignore contemporary German publications. Like Cole's and Gallucci's books it poses

new problems and opens fresh avenues of inquiry, attesting to the vitality of Cellini studies in a new century.

GWENDOLYN TROTTEIN  
Bishop's University

Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder, eds, *Caught in the Act: an anthology of performance art by Canadian women*. Toronto, YYZ Books, 2004, 444 pp., 19 colour and 219 black-and-white illus., \$39.95 Cdn.

While it would be overstatement to say that reading the prefatory remarks by the editors of *Caught in the Act: an anthology of performance art by Canadian women* provides all one needs to know about performance art in Canada, the editorial texts at the beginning of this book do provide a kind of guide to understanding its contents and parameters. For it is within the pages of Tanya Mars's "Preface" and Johanna Householder's "Apologia" that the terms of engagement for the compilation of this volume become clear. Without these texts, one might be left to wonder at what could appear to be the generational biases of *Caught in the Act*, or at what might seem to be certain historical commitments or artistic over-representations within its pages.

In reading these introductory texts, however, it becomes clear that this book represents the histories of performance art by Canadian women that the editors and authors know best and can speak to most coherently – the 1970s and 1980s, "that time when women made an impact on the contemporary art scene" (p. 11) – leaving room for the writing of future and subsequent volumes that will take on the myriad methods of performance that follow. Indeed, Mars and Householder declare the desire and necessity for such future writing to be undertaken.

If accusations of historical or artistic bias were to become tempting, one would do well to remember Householder's admonition that this book was undertaken because it "showed no signs of coming into existence on its own" (p. 18). While this is certainly true of all books, it is particularly the case for a book on the histories and practices of performance art. As so many of this book's contributors note, performance art is characterized by its persistent undefinability and resistance to historical concretization. In part this is due to its absent-object reliance on memory and personal narrative. Performance art has also been "an expedient, almost involuntary, political positioning for artists who had little interest in creating work within the confines of pre-existing genres, media, or mechanisms for production and distribution" (p. 13). This urgent drive to produce per-

formance is not easily represented within texts that seek to establish performance's historical and current relevance.

And while it is the case that performance art is largely under-represented in the history of art, *Caught in the Act* takes up the additionally important task of representing performance art by women in Canada. Existing histories of performance do consider works by women, notably such artists as Carolee Schneemann, Hannah Wilke, Laurie Anderson, but until very recently, rarely in detail as fulsome as that attributed to some of the male artists whose work seemed to embody the heroic and risk-taking tendencies of early performance art – artists like Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, and Hermann Nitsch. Serious considerations of women's performances have often considered female body art but have been less concerned with other modes of performance by women, thus speaking at the same time to a presumed (and sometimes explicitly stated) feminist politic, while occasionally furthering the subjugation of women through an ongoing essentializing of the female body.

If performance art is considered to be a liminal practice, or set of practices, within the history of art, so too has consideration of Canadian content largely taken place on or within the margins of art history, even in Canada. This book critically functions to demonstrate the eminence and vanguardism of Canadian women's performance to scholars, students, and practitioners within Canada, and also to those elsewhere who may study performance but know little of this country's contributions to national and international networks of performance practice.

Locating the starting point for this consideration of performance history in the 1970s – a moment widely recognized as one at which performance emerged fully into the art world as a set of radical and politically-inflected practices – this book sets the development of Canadian performance by women not just in the context of those artists to come to the fore in America and Europe, but within the particular social and cultural formations of Canada. These formations include the relevance of national and regional arts councils and the national network of artist-run centres to the production and presentation of performances over the past forty years. Without these networks, much of the activity described in this book might not have taken place, and *Caught in the Act* includes performances that were facilitated by and presented at such supportive spaces as Western Front in