

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### D'Elia, Una Roman, ed. Rethinking Renaissance Drawings: Essays in Honour of David McTavish

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Fourth, the ostrich in naturalistic representations, which exclude symbolic or allegorical meanings, focusing on the bird intended as a living creature. Such interest seems to begin with Raphael's *Creation of the Animals* in the Vatican Stanze (1518–19) and reaches its peak during the Counter-Reformation; the author refers to the reproduction in natural scale of an ostrich in the polychrome sculpture of the bird in the Chapel of Adam and Eve at the Sacro Monte of Varallo, and to many other engravings of the period. This is a very crucial point because it shows how Renaissance curiosity towards nature could be perfectly combined with a Christian spirit. In this light, the author's claim that Breughel's *The Four Elements* (1617–21) depicts a powerful and detailed nature in order to “hunt for the Christian truth behind the profane world” (181) or to express patron Federico Borromeo's “interest in the new science” (184). In this reviewer's opinion, during the Renaissance, nature was perceived as symbol itself in line with Paul's *invisibilia Dei per ea, quae visibilia facta sunt, cognoscuntur* (Rom. 1:20), a point already made by Giuseppe Olmi in his *L'inventario del mondo: catalogazione della natura e luoghi del sapere nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992, 157–64). Also, one should keep in mind, as D'Elia in fact does, that Federico Borromeo was raised by Gabriele Paleotti, the theorist, in Paolo Prodi's words, of naturalistic/historical realism (Paolo Prodi, *Il cardinal Gabriele Paleotti*, vol. 2, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1967, 537–39), whereby the notion of science could not be secluded from a historical approach to classical and medieval tradition.

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**D'Elia, Una Roman, ed.**

***Rethinking Renaissance Drawings: Essays in Honour of David McTavish.***

Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2015. Pp. 409 + 147 colour ill. ISBN 978-0-7735-4636-3 (hardcover) \$125.

To honour David McTavish (1943–2014), his colleagues at Queen's University invited twenty friends, students, and colleagues to contribute essays on Renaissance drawings—the subject to which he contributed the most, as an

essay by Alison Sherman in this volume caringly documents. Trained at the University of Toronto and the Courtauld Institute (before the PhD in art history was offered in Canada), McTavish, who passed away unexpectedly while the volume was being assembled, sustained the collecting and study of old master drawings and paintings in Canada in his role as curator and museum director at the AGO, National Gallery of Canada, and Agnes Etherington Art Centre, and as professor for four decades at Queen's University. This volume is not only a tribute to McTavish; it is an important contribution to the history of the study of early modern art in Canada.

Ably edited and introduced by Una Roman D'Elia, *Rethinking Renaissance Drawings* does well and more than what its title promises. The volume encompasses drawing beyond "the Renaissance," with contributions on Italian, French, Dutch, English, and German works into the eighteenth century (with Pierre du Prey's essay on a drawing by William Chambers of an Italian motif taken up by his pupil John Yenn). The volume is strong in connoisseurship, with Charles Hope's detailed analysis of how scholars have overlooked the evidence of drawings around the scantily documented works of Giorgione; Paul Joannides's publication of a newly revealed verso of a drawing by Sebastiano del Piombo, confirming views of how Sebastiano developed motifs given to him by Michelangelo for a painted composition; Catherine Monbeig Goguel's convincing attribution of a rare female portrait from around 1500 to Agnolo di Domenico di Donnino del Mazziere, an artist whose small oeuvre of drawings she has done much to assemble; and David Franklin's addition of two drawings, attributed to the Master of Egmont in the National Gallery of Canada, to the unsolved puzzle posed by a growing group of works by this as yet unnamed northern artist working in Italy in the late sixteenth century. Four drawings by Federico Zuccari are identified by James Mundy as copies of paintings in the historical portrait collection of the Medici (though his interpretation of the choice of subjects as an index of Zuccari's obsession with fame overlooks the likelihood that Zuccari was amassing a reliable sourcebook of true likenesses for use in future works); and Nicholas Turner connects two newly discovered paintings by Guercino of the Magdalen to a series of drawings of the same subject—now make much more sense.

Five essays concern the process of drawing in theory and in practice, with a strong emphasis on the role of drawings in the execution or reproduction of the master's compositions. Michel Hochmann ably lays out the stakes of this

practice in the judgment of drawings (of the Bassano) as either preparatory for or *ricordi* after; this is especially interesting as regards Venice where, according to long-held beliefs now contested by scholars, drawing was less practised than in Central Italy. Catherine Whistler interprets the spate of Venetian drawing books of the seventeenth century as a sign not of the need for reform in Venetian painting and drawing but of the reach of drawing into the noble class. Aimee Ng looks at a group of “see through” drawings by Parmigianino, proposing that media thinking works in both directions—that artists sought the effects of drawing in etchings and that etchings stimulated a practice of drawing in reverse as well. Franziska Gottwald’s essay on Perugino’s cartoons matches Perugino’s studio practice to the appearance of his paintings as an accumulation of independent parts, much in the way Wölfflin would describe painting of the Quattrocento in his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. Several essays address the intermedial tangle of imitation and copying. Sally Hickson brings together the complex cluster of drawings and paintings and engravings after Michelangelo’s *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*; and in a close study of Perino del Vaga’s drawings that copy or use German prints, Sharon Gregory refines previous work on this subject, showing how Vasari attributed Perino’s success in imitation to his selectively absorbing motifs and compositions while retaining his own graceful style. David Ekserdjian argues that Raphael drawings were more of a source for artists’ compositions than has been appreciated, noting the difficulty of locating any of the drawings in the sixteenth century with any certainty.

Northern drawings are discussed here by David de Witt, who reattributes a sheet in the Agnes Etherington Art Centre to Philips Koninck; and in an ambitious essay, Stephanie Dickey uses quite analogous figure drawings by Annibale Carracci and Rembrandt as a hinge to suggest that Rembrandt is more similar to Annibale than to Caravaggio, the artist to whom he is often compared. The marriage of technology and art history is becoming stronger and more interesting by the day, and Queen’s University has invested in this relationship, as the essay of Ron Spronk and Casey Lee in this volume attests. Their essay describes The Bosch Drawings Project undertaken at Queen’s to coordinate the photographing of all of Bosch’s works and their underdrawings using a strict protocol.

The collecting of drawings upon which we as scholars are so dependent is also given attention in this volume, with Cathleen Hoeniger showing the

tenacity of Vasari's judgments in the ways in which early Italian drawings came into and were classified in two French collections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sebastian Schütze also describes the outline of a new project in his essay on the fascinating Viennese art historian and collector of old master drawings, Benno Geiger.

For this volume (supported by a Festschrift Fund at Queen's) the Queen's–McGill press spared no expense. There are many colour illustrations, helping to correct our overly black-and-white understanding of Renaissance drawings. That the very welcome illustrations did not identify media in their captions is a pity given the emphasis on technique and medium in the book overall.

There are many interesting essays in this volume, and readers will derive much benefit from the variety of approaches and issues raised: a valuable cross-section of thinking about drawing. While some of the essays tend to lose the forest for the trees, even the most micrological analyses carry methodological implications for the reader. Steven Stowell's essay struck me as a fitting leitmotif for this tribute to the late McTavish. In Stowell's well-crafted analysis of the role of drawing in Vasari's lives of the artists, drawing the subject of the baptism of Christ was shown to function as a "ritual exercise that transforms youths" much like baptism brings people into the church. This volume beautifully attests to the high esteem in which David McTavish was held by his colleagues and by the many he baptized into the world of old master drawings.

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### **Desan, Philippe.**

***Montaigne, A Life.* Trans. Steven Rendall and Lisa Neal.**

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. xxxv, 796 + 21 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0691-16787-9 (hardcover) US\$39.95.

The "consubstantiality" that Montaigne proclaims to exist between his *Essais* and his life invites the reader to see his book as an autobiography. It is, however, an autobiography that is lacking in specifics and that leaves unsaid and unreported many details and periods of its author's life, not to mention the motivations that led him to certain decisions. Hence the curiosity that is aroused in anyone who