

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Dickerson III, C. D., Anthony Sigel and Ian Wardropper (eds.).
Bernini: Sculpting in Clay. With contributions by Andrea
Bacchi, Tomaso Montanari, and Steven F. Ostrow

Tara L. Nadeau

Volume 36, numéro 2, printemps 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091146ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i2.20176>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Nadeau, T. (2013). Compte rendu de [Dickerson III, C. D., Anthony Sigel and Ian Wardropper (eds.). Bernini: Sculpting in Clay. With contributions by Andrea Bacchi, Tomaso Montanari, and Steven F. Ostrow]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(2), 179–181.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i2.20176>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2013

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

é
rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Dickerson III, C. D., Anthony Sigel and Ian Wardropper (eds.).

***Bernini: Sculpting in Clay.* With contributions by Andrea Bacchi, Tomaso Montanari, and Steven F. Ostrow.**

New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York / New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. Pp. xvi, 416 + 472 ill. ISBN 978-0-300-18500-3 (hardcover) \$65.

This handsome volume is occasioned by the exhibition *Bernini: Sculpting in Clay* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While the sculpture of Gian Lorenzo Bernini has long held pride of place in the study of Baroque art, this exhibition turns its attention to the terracotta models—*bozzetti*—that were a fundamental part of his working method in a career spanning more than six decades. Premised on Irving Lavin’s notion of “calculated spontaneity,” the exhibition posits that the *bozzetti* manifest Bernini’s first concept, and are at once the direct emanation of the master’s thoughts and art objects in their own right. With offerings from a host of Bernini scholars, this volume also provides an assessment of the trajectory of the *bozzetti* during Bernini’s life—from his beginnings in Rome to his triumphant (but ultimately disappointing) invitation to the French court of Louis XIV—and after, as the clay models became both a celebrated *trouvaille* and an object of methodological scrutiny. The essays are complemented by a comprehensive visual glossary and catalogue written by C. D. Dickerson III and Anthony Sigel. Working in concert with the meticulous conservation of Sigel, the essays offer an unprecedented re-assessment of the *bozzetti* in the sculptor’s oeuvre.

Dickerson furnishes an original perspective on Bernini’s youth, hypothesizing that Bernini’s education by his father, and concomitant youthful projects, exposed him to model preparation. Dickerson credits Pietro Bernini with the skill to teach design and modelling, offering a nuanced view of Bernini’s father. His assertion is buttressed by the contract for the Barberini Chapel in Sant’Andrea della Valle, where the duo carved *putti* from Pietro’s clay models. Less secure, however, is the relationship between Bernini and Stefano Maderno. Active in the same patronage circles, Maderno emerges as an appealing mentor to the young sculptor, but as Dickerson acknowledges it is difficult to ascertain Maderno’s influence on Bernini given the scant number of Maderno’s models that overlap with the years the two artists interacted. Dickerson assembles an intriguing collection of visual sources, such as death masks and small bronzes,

which might have influenced Bernini's early models, positing that the sculptor gradually developed the modelling style that defines the *bozzetti* in this exhibition.

Ian Wardropper's essay explores the interaction between drawings and models, arguing that both media captured the immediacy of Bernini's concepts, which were then transferred to the finished sculptures. In Bernini's hands, both *pensieri* and *bozzetti* were executed with speedy virtuosity. The drawings, however, are more utilitarian; thus, the clay models retain their supremacy in the hierarchy of preparatory materials. Bernini's workshop takes centre stage in the next essay, in which Andrea Bacchi contends that the *bozzetti* were the "sole province of Bernini," while *modelli* and *modelli grandi* were workshop productions that facilitated the translation of the master's idea to the sculpture. Given the scope of papal projects, it is unsurprising that favoured sculptors in Bernini's retinue were entrusted with creating *modelli* on their own. This acknowledgment problematizes Bernini's authorship of such works, a controversy incisively discussed by Jennifer Montagu. Bacchi, however, rejects the assertion that this custom undermines Bernini's status as primogenitor; instead, he maintains that the first concept embodied in the *bozzetti* invests Bernini with signature rights to all works generated by his studio.

Tomaso Montanari contextualizes the *bozzetti* in the world of collecting and connoisseurship, proposing that public adulation of Bernini incited the feverish acquisition of sculptors' preparatory materials by early modern collectors, an activity preserving *bozzetti* into the twenty-first century. Tackling the reception of the *bozzetti*, Montanari interprets the absence of an entrenched collecting circle to the lesser status of sculpture in the seventeenth century: a medium without a prominent advocate. Furthermore, the *bozzetti* accrued prestige at an uneven pace. While some collectors, men primarily associated with the papal court, acquired select models in the 1660s, Bernini's sons recognized neither the monetary nor the aesthetic value of the *bozzetti*, as they go unrecorded in the 1681 inventory and in Filippo Baldinucci's catalogue. Montanari also connects the nascent popularity of the *bozzetti* to theatrical descriptions of Bernini's sculpting. His most compelling argument centres on the "almost fetishistic veneration" of objects produced by Bernini in the final decades of his life. The Roman elite's fondness for Bernini, evidenced by the fear of his death abroad and the jubilant celebration of his return, evokes an atmosphere in which any curio would assume unprecedented value.

In the capstone essay, Steven F. Ostrow reveals the influence of Vasarian artistic priorities on analysis of the *bozzetti*. Excavating the origins of the idea that the *bozzetti* were formed with rapidity, he discovers that it has its foundations in Vasari's "fire of art." Echoed by Bernini in Paul Fréart de Chantelou's diary, Vasari's contention that sketches represent the artist's first concept has permeated nearly all discourse on the *bozzetti*. This claim for the instantaneous translation of the artist's thought has led to overly optimistic claims about works such as the *Cathedra Petri* in Detroit exhibiting the mark of Bernini's genius. As Ostrow notes, contemporary scholarship on the *bozzetti* has its roots in the crucial work of Lavin, beginning with his 1955 dissertation. Although Ostrow suggests that the field has begun questioning the hegemony of Lavin's approach, Dickerson's introduction confirms that "looseness" and "speed" are the guiding principles of the exhibition. While the catalogue largely adheres to the precepts codified over the last half century, the rigorous application of technical knowledge to the historical understanding of Bernini's sculpting results in an illuminating reconsideration of the *bozzetti* as physical objects and art objects.

TARA L. NADEAU, *University of Toronto*

Frieden, Philippe.

La lettre et le miroir : Écrire l'histoire d'actualité selon Jean Molinet.

Collection Bibliothèque du XV^e siècle. Paris : Honoré Champion, 2013. 480 p. ISBN 9782745324429 (broché) 85 €.

Le titre de cette monographie consacrée à l'œuvre de Jean Molinet est équivoque : il peut donner à penser qu'il sera question du genre épistolaire quand, en fait, celui-ci n'occupe qu'une place extrêmement marginale au sein de l'étude, tout comme, du reste, dans la production du grand rhétoricien. La lettre dont il est question ici a partie liée à la signification littérale plutôt qu'à la dimension métaphorique, mais traduit également, dans une ambiguïté qui traverse l'ensemble de la réflexion, un rapport à l'écriture presque fétichiste, voire « lettriste », où l'on risque fort, pour reprendre les mots de l'auteur, de se noyer dans les entrelacs de l'ornementation.