Lorizzo, Loredana: *Pellegrino Peri: Il mercato dell'arte nella Roma barocca*, Roma: De Luca Editori D'arte 2010

ISBN-13: 978-88-6557-001-2, 231 S, 27,99 EUR

Reviewed by: Arnold Witte, Universiteit van Amsterdam

The phenomenon of the art market in Rome has in the last two decades emerged from the shadow of art patronage. No longer is northern Europe the only region explored by art historians focusing on the economic and social aspects of artistic production (and economic and social historians looking at art historical subjects). Loredana Lorizzo herself, but also other authors such as Richard Spear, Luigi Spezzaferro and Patrizia Cavazzini have dealt with aspects of the primary and secondary market for paintings in Rome and elsewhere in Italy.[1] These studies have taught us that there was an ample demand in Italy, and especially in Rome, for paintings of varying quality for a wide range of customers, and that this was already the case from the late sixteenth century onwards. If anything has become clear by now, it is that the opposition between the north and the south of Europe is the result of a historiographical opposition between Italy and the Netherlands, and that they have much more in common than hitherto assumed.

There is a difference on the level of historical material, however. Where the research on Dutch and Flemish art markets was based mainly on inventories and sale reports, most of the material on which the recent insights into the Roman or Italian art market was based came from notarial, judicial, institutional and personal archives. These sources provided important indications about the existence and the volume of the art market that could not be, or simply were not deduced from the many inventories of Italian art collections.[2] Patrizia Cavazzini, for example, has traced acts from court cases involving painters, many of who are completely unknown to the modern art historian, and whose work is often also untraceable. They worked for the lower end of the market, which was ignored by authors such as Baglione, Passeri and Pascoli, and neither did these painters sign their products. In other words, there existed an entire segment of the art production, probably of rather low quality, we otherwise do not know about, apart from the less than first-rate works that turn up at provincial auction houses with attributions such as "Roman 17th-century school".

In her present book, Lorizzo presents us with new information on three aspects of the art trade, namely that of the intermediary, dealing in works of art in a specific genre, and operating in the middle to upper section of the market. The book brings together the information Lorizzo has discussed in preceding articles, and now includes the full transcription of an archival document preserved in the Biblioteca Corsiniana in Rome.[3] On the basis of this account book of the art dealer Pellegrino Peri, a native of Genua and active in Rome in the 1660s to the 1690s, she is able to sketch out the daily affairs of an art merchant specializing in still-life paintings, kitchen-pieces, marine paintings and landscapes. In this case, most of the names of the painters are known to us, both through biographical sources, and by means of signed or attributed paintings. The document, spanning the period of 1662 to 1689, reveals quite a number of interesting aspects of the

trade in paintings that confirm, and in some cases also question, the insights gained in previous studies.

For one thing, Peri had painters working for him on a contract, supplying him with regular merchandise, as in the case of Girolamo Troppa. This painter was a one-time collaborator of Gaulli and his style was similar to Maratta's - whose pupil he might have been as Luigi Lanzi once supposed.[4] Troppa furnished Peri with several types of work, ranging from religious subjects to mythological pieces set in landscapes. These were probably commissioned by Peri, who offered them for sale in his shop or sold them on to other merchants. For example, he sold works by Troppa to Herman Stoffelsz. van Swoll, a merchant operating in Amsterdam, who in turn sold the paintings to the king of Denmark. This illustrates that Peri was not only dealing with paintings from his own shop behind the Piazza Navona in the context of the domestic art market, but also used his contacts to sell his ware in the rest of Europe. Peri was thus active in the market of wholesale, and this illustrates that Rome was a place of net-export in art, where painters could be working for anonymous clients elsewhere. This deviates from the idea that the papal city (and Italy as a whole) bought more art than was produced there, and therefore was a net-import area of art.[5]

What is also clear from Peri's account book is that many (or even most) artists came to Peri for other reasons. He lent them money, and in recompense often asked them - or they offered - to paint pictures for him. This happened in the case of such artists as Giacinto Brandi, Gaspar Dughet, Giovan Battista Gaulli, Filippo Lauri, Eberhard Keil (Mons. Bernardo) and Jacob Ferdinand Voet. They came to him in financial need, and as a good Christian he helped them out. Quite often he never got his money back, as he himself already suspected. In his account book, he jotted down comments in this vein, and also recorded when the painter in question had passed away, annulling the account. It also explains why Peri was on the one hand operating in a specialized field - supplying his clients with still life and genre pieces - but simultaneously also had religious and mythological paintings in stock, and even acted as an intermediate in portrait painting; this was the simple result of his money-lending practice to artists specialized in various other genres. In that respect, Lorizzo's book reconfirms the conclusions drawn by Patrizia Cavazzini in her book on the early Seicento art market in Rome, namely that the emergence of the market was related to the tight supply in ready money, which forced not only painters themselves but everyone dealing with them to use objects - paintings - in lieu of payment.[6]

This lack of cash also applies to the clients Peri was serving from his shop in the Via di Pasquino. It led to all kinds of wheeling and dealing, such as the sending back of the paintings acquired by high-standing clients who were either unhappy with their purchases or incapable of paying off their debts. In other instances, especially when his clients were artisans or merchants, he was paid in kind, such as the butchers who paid their debts with Peri by supplying him with meat over a certain period. This again underlines how the dealing in paintings was, just as all other kinds of merchandise, done at least in part without cash. This also overthrows the supposition that the art market could only flourish in those places where a market economy had developed in such a way that surplus money was available for the acquisition of goods not serving primary needs. In fact, the large amount of art in the households of non-nobles was not directly related to their wealth in financial terms at all, but was based on their equal position as actors in the early modern market. This conjures up the question whether the presence of art in northern European households was only due to Calvinist parsimony leading to capitalism, or if this was simply due to the fact that art

dealers belonged to the same social level as merchants and artisans.

In all respects, the subtitle of Lorizzo's book - 'the market for art in Baroque Rome' - reveals the value of this study, placing Peri and his account book firmly in the context of supply and demand for art in the late Seicento. To a certain extent the book is focused on artists and works of art, and therefore only deals with the more factual side from a traditional art historical perspective. For the reader versed in the subject of art markets in early modern Europe, however, the discussion of the archival source and its implications open many interesting perspectives that, together with other recent studies on the phenomenon, are changing our outlook on the economic side of art production in Seicento Italy.

Anmerkungen:

[1] Lorenda Lorizzo, 'Il mercato dell'arte a Roma nel xvii secolo: "pittori bottegari" e "rivenditori di quadri" nei documenti dell'Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di San Luca'. In: The Art Market in Italy 15th-17th centuries/Il Mercato dell'arte in Italia Secc. XV-XVII, Marcello Fantoni/Louisa C. Matthew/Sara F. Matthews--Grieco (eds.), Ferrara/Modena, 2003, p. 325-336 and idem, 'People and Practices in the Painting Trade in XVII Century Rome'. In: Mapping Markets or Painting in Europe, 1450-1750, Neil R. de Marchi/Hans J. van Miegroet (eds.), Turnhout 2006, p. 343-358, and Richard Spear/Philip Sohm (eds.), Painting for Profit. The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-century Italian Painters, New Haven 2010.

[2] See for example the series Documents for the History of Collecting; Italian Inventories, published by the Getty Information Institute.

[3] Loredana Lorizzo, 'Artisti, collezionisti e mercanti genovesi nella bottega di Pellegrino Peri "rivenditore di quadri a Roma nel Seicento"'. In: Valerio Castello. Percorsi di approfondimento, Genova (in print), and idem, Pittori di natura morta e mercato dell'arte nella Roma del Seicento: novitˆ su Andrea Bonanni, Carlo Manieri, Antonio Tibaldi, Giovan Battista Gavarotti e Laura Bernasconi'. In: Natura morta: rappresentazione dell'oggetto, Costanza Barbieri/Dalma Frascarelli (eds.), Naples 2010, p. 103-104.

[4] Luigi Lanzi, Storia pittorica della Italia. Dal risorgimento delle Belle Arti fin presso al fine del XVIII secolo, vol. II, Bassano, 1809, p. 231.

[5] See Neil de Marchi/Hans van Miegroet, 'The history of art markets'. In: Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture, Vicktor A. Ginsburgh/David Throsby (eds.), Amsterdam etc., 2006, p. 73-84 for the net-import and net-export aspects of the early modern art trade.

[6] Patrizia Cavazzini, Painting as Business in Early Seventeenth-Century Rome, University Park, Penn., 2008; this is also assumed by Richard Spear in 'Rome - Setting the Stage'. In: Painting for Profit. The Economic Lives of Seventeenth-century Italian Painters, Richard Spear/Philip Sohm (eds.), New Haven, 2010, p.34-35.

Recommended Citation:
Arnold Witte: [Review of:] Lorizzo, Loredana: *Pellegrino Peri: Il mercato dell'arte nella Roma barocca*, Roma 2010. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 17, 2012 (accessed Nov 13, 2026), <https://arthist.net/reviews/2574>.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 International License. For the conditions under which you may distribute, copy and transmit the work, please go to https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/