Rudolph, Stella; Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, Simonetta: *Carlo Maratti (1625-1713). Tra la magnificenza del Barocco e il sogno d'Arcadia : dipinti e disegni (= Dipinti e disegni dal Rinascimento al Neoclassico)*, Roma: Ugo Bozzi 2024
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Carlo Maratti (1625-1713) can be considered the most successful painter in the Papal States in the second half of the 17th and early 18th century, particularly after the deaths of his master Andrea Sacchi (1599-1661) and Pietro da Cortona (1597-1669). Maratti arrived in Rome from a village in the Marches region (Camerano) in 1635/36 and from the 1640s onwards began working for prestigious patrons, including several papal families (such as the Barberini, Chigi, Rospigliosi, and Altieri), religious orders and powerful institutions of the Roman Curia. Maratti's fame also spread throughout Europe, and his patrons included some powerful individuals such as Empress Eleonora Gonzaga Nevers, widow of Ferdinand III of Habsburg, King Louis XIV of France, French and English noblemen.

Writing a monograph on a great painter like Maratti is no easy undertaking given the complexity of his long and successful career, so the authors should be given credit for having taken on a very challenging task. The pioneer of research on Maratti was Stella Rudolph (1941-2020), who published her first studies on him as early as the 1970s. Unfortunately, her untimely death meant that she was unable to finish the monograph she had started. It has now been completed by Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò, using some texts already written by Rudolph and her notes, consulted thanks to the collaboration of her heirs.

The monograph consists of two volumes. The first contains nine chapters: two written by Rudolph and bibliographically updated by Prosperi Valenti Rodinò (La giovinezza; Prima maturità); six written by both authors (Carlo Maratti ritrattista; Le grandi pale e i grandi affreschi; Madonne e Sacre Famiglie; Maratti figurista per pittori di nature morte e paesaggi; Carlo Maratti «primo dipintore d'Arcadia»; Fortuna critica); one by Prosperi Valenti Rodinò alone (Maratti e il disegno). The second volume collects the catalogue raisonné entries on the paintings (251), with in-depth references to their preparatory drawings. This is followed by a further catalogue of drawings (by Prosperi Valenti Rodinò) consisting of 123 entries, devoted to drawings for sculptures, decorative projects and portraits, drawings for special occasions or events, drawings for lost works and for pupils.

The study was conceived in an old-fashioned way, focused principally on a descriptive analysis of the works (certainly by Maratti or attributed) and a stylistic examination of them, often with the aim of identifying Maratti's reference models or recognising the classicizing or Baroque components of his style.

The weakest aspect of this study is the lack of historical context on the figure of Maratti and his

work, both of which deserve to be considered in relation to the social, political and economic history of Baroque Rome. In addition to his strong ties to the Roman Curia, Maratti was court painter to Cardinal Antonio Barberini the Younger for a decade as a member of his household [1], president (principe) for life of the Accademia di San Luca (the first prior to Canova) and a member of the Accademia dell'Arcadia. He was even awarded the cross of the Order of Christ by Clement XI in 1704, a mark of great social distinction and a highly prestigious public honour rarely accorded to artists (only mentioned in the monograph on p. 83). In the wake of the pioneering research by Paolo Coen and Richard E. Spear whose illuminating studies have investigated Maratti's huge financial earnings from both his work as a painter and as an art dealer [2], it would have been helpful to delve into the extent and significance of the wealth he accumulated during the most successful periods of his career. This aspect of the painter's life must have reinforced his role and visibility in the Roman ruling class: it would have been interesting to understand how. The professional and social status of this great artist should have been compared to those of other painters of similar standing: in the Papal States, in the other Italian states, and in the rest of Europe. However, the monograph focuses almost exclusively on Maratti's works, detached from any real consideration of their cost, function and subsequent public reception. Also lacking is a reconstruction of the rhetorical efficacy of the images painted by Maratti for his wealthy, important and powerful patrons, to be investigated by applying the tools of iconology.

There is no trace of research into the entrepreneurial organisation of Maratti's workshop in his most successful period – particularly from the late 1670s – when he received so many commissions that he certainly could not have handled them on his own.[3] This aspect could have been tackled by taking as a model Donatella Livia Sparti's 1997 study on Pietro da Cortona, like Maratti a great artist at the head of a large workshop.[4] Remarks on Maratti's pictorial technique are few and far between, limited essentially to the type of brushstrokes or the colour effects he achieved. Observations on brushstrokes are also used by the authors as a means to attribute some paintings to Maratti and to date them (e.g. cat. no. 14, p. 330; cat. no. 30, p. 398). It might instead have been more helpful to explore some aspects of Maratti's technique, which is not always so predictable. Previous research undertaken by restorers and art historians on several paintings by Maratti using diagnostics, archival documents and restoration reports have yielded significant new insights into his pictorial technique.[5]

A further weak point of the monograph is the scarcity of unpublished archive documents, sixteen in all, in three cases accompanied by incomplete archival references that make it impossible to trace them for verification (pp. 605, 617, 687). Yet studies on Maratti from the 1990s to the present day have shown that many unpublished documents on the painter can still be found in the archives of the great Roman families (such as the Barberini and the Chigi) or in other archives in Rome or Vatican City (such as the Archivio di Stato di Roma, the Archivio del Vicariato, the Archivio Apostolico Vaticano).[6] A study on such an important painter should have been supported by a dedicated campaign of documentary research. Unfortunately, the monograph also lacks summaries of the many archival documents already published, which would have been extremely helpful.

As well as a painter, Maratti was a restorer. In this capacity he was entrusted with the direction of the conservation of Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican Stanze and Loggias (under Innocent XI) and of the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel (under Innocent XII). However, only eleven lines are dedicat-

ed to Maratti as a restorer in the introduction (pp. xiii-xiv). Considering that Maratti genuinely worshipped Raphael, as Giovan Pietro Bellori pointed out [7], Maratti's conservation work on Raphael's frescoes at least deserved a separate discussion given its strong symbolic significance.

The catalogue is also missing several paintings by Maratti, either certain or attributed. It is unclear whether the two authors did not consider them to be by the painter or whether this is simply an oversight. As an example we could mention two fairly well-known pictures, both in public museums: the oil on copper depicting Time consuming everything except Virtue (Palazzo Chigi, Ariccia, Rome) and the oil on canvas portrait of the Bohemian count Franz Anton Hovora Berka of Dubá and Lipé (National Gallery in Prague).[8]

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, this monograph nonetheless provides a useful and up-to-date bibliography on Maratti and the majority of his works (certain or attributed), which will hopefully encourage further study and investigation, particularly on aspects not covered by the two authors.

References

[1] Giovan Battista Fidanza, Being the Court Painter of a Cardinal in Baroque Rome: Chronicle and History of Carlo Maratti for Antonio Barberini the Younger, in: Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 69 (2024), pp. 400-464.

[2] Paolo Coen, Il mercato dei quadri a Roma nel diciottesimo secolo. Florence: Olschki, 2010, esp. pp. 52-57, 364-65; Richard E. Spear, Rome: Setting the Stage, in: Richard E. Spear and Philip Sohm (eds), Painting for Profit. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010, pp. 33-113.

[3] Insights into the production aspects of Maratti's workshop were provided by Coen 2010 (see above n. 2) and Alessandro Agresti, Carlo Maratti: Eredità ed evoluzioni del classicismo romano. Rome: De Luca, 2022, pp. 13-15, 96-97.

[4] Donatella Livia Sparti, La casa di Pietro da Cortona. Rome: Palombi, 1997, esp. pp. 53-68.

[5] One of the most important of these studies is not cited in the monograph: Anna Maria Marcone, Pietro Moioli, Claudio Seccaroni, Indagini radiografiche sulla pala di Carlo Maratti nella cappella Spada, in: Bollettino ICR 16-17 (2008), pp. 135-145.

[6] Examples of studies based on unpublished documents relating to Maratti include: Francesco Petrucci, Pittura di ritratto a Roma: Il Seicento. Rome: Budai, 2008, pp. 408-412; Maria Celeste Cola, Le Committenze artistiche dell'Eccellentissimo Principe Prefetto e la giovinezza di Carlo Maratta, in Francesco Solinas and Maria Celeste Cola (eds.), Barberiniana. Rome: De Luca, 2024, pp. 119-131; Giovan Battista Fidanza, Carlo Maratti's additions to the 'Barberini Venus', in: The Burlington Magazine 1428 (2022), pp. 260-265; Fidanza 2024 (see above n. 1).

[7] Giovan Pietro Bellori, Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni. Edited by Evelina Borea. Turin: Einaudi, 1976, pp. 575, 577, 590, 617.

[8] Francesco Petrucci, Carlo Maratti, La Virtù trionfa sul Tempo, in: Quaderni del Barocco 40 (2023), pp. 2-16; Lenka Stolárová and Vit Vlnas (eds.), Karel Škréta 1610-1674: his Work and his Era. Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2010, cat. no. III.31, p. 153.

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