

tures d'excellente facture, qui font tout le prix de ce document étonnant. Ces illustrations sont ici rendues avec toute la précision et la finesse désirables.

Notons encore que, par sa présentation, par l'excellence de sa typographie et la qualité remarquable des nombreuses reproductions qui l'illustrent, la maison Nuovi Orizzonti a produit un ouvrage dont la manipulation est aussi agréable que la lecture en est aisée.

On regrettera cependant qu'aucune notice ne présente les auteurs qui ont contribué à sa réalisation, et que la seule bibliographie, d'ailleurs rudimentaire, qui accompagne une des contributions contient quelques erreurs, la rendant peu fiable.

LOUIS VALCKE, *Université de Sherbrooke*

Robert Williams. *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. 243.

This compact, lucid book about the role of art theory in the later Italian Renaissance argues that in the sixteenth century art became "essentially theoretical" and is thus concerned as much with the invisible as with the visible. The book deals with Vasari, Varchi, Borghini, Gilio, Lomazzo, Zuccaro, Tasso, Bocchi, and other theorists, who claimed in various formulations that art creates culture, or at least a new idea of culture. It raises a number of arresting questions about form, *disegno*, and decorum, and about the coercive powers of art and representation — their producing, and then their constituting, an age's reality. Above all, it explores the idea that art exercises a "superintendency" over knowledge, is "a form of knowledge or mode of knowing that necessarily involves a mastery of other modes," and is potentially, even ideally, "a mastery of all modes." Williams' at times Neoplatonic, at times neo-Kantian, thesis, which dwells on the central considerations attending signification, asserts that this theoretical redefinition of art is itself "the distinctive achievement" of the Renaissance. It explores the complexity of the transaction occurring in the viewer, who subordinates his subjective perceptions to a belief in the power of an intelligible order of an art transcending his eye, even his mind's eye. For these theorists indeed, the artist is transformed from being a master technician into someone with "a special kind of insight into things," who strives to create "a reflection of his entire mode of being in the world." This orients us, predictably, towards a Michelangelesque notion of art as "the process of self-perfection," "a prolonged process of becoming," "a spiritual pilgrimage," "a search for valid signs," "a search for the ground of being," for "transcendence" itself. As the "art of arts," it is the fundamental faculty of the mind which judges and then correlates all things perceived, designing our realities.

Hence the centrality for Williams of Vasari and *disegno*, the topic of his opening chapter. In the second edition of his *Lives*, Vasari had defined *disegno* in Aristotelian terms, as that which “derives from many things a universal judgment” and comprehends the law, form or idea of all of nature, that is, the relationship of nature’s parts to the unified whole. Along with the cognate notion of *maniera*, which strives “for that beauty which comes from having frequently copied the most beautiful things,” *disegno* signifies, in other words, an ideal envisioning: a collective judging of analogies, which governs the practical functioning aspects of the artist’s mind, but also its “loftiest understanding.” It constitutes “the most fundamental, most profound, rule of art,” in that it supposes and creates a formal, and thus an aesthetic, reality.

Chapter Two argues that the period’s notion of style is “fundamentally a problem of identity” conceived in an “idealized and objective way,” whereas decorum is the principle that regulates the relation of style to matter and audience and therefore “the superintendency of style.” Insofar as style rationalizes the diversity of the modes of representation and subjects them “to a potential unity” reflecting the world’s order, it regulates the relation of art to the world beyond art, presenting the objective in the subjective terms of decorum. Here Williams turns to a probing discussion of the “virtues” that certain paintings, Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, for instance, are said to possess: strength, purity, and so on. Such paintings discover what Cennini calls “things unseen” — the abstract characters and ideals, not just the affective valencies, of their subjects. Or, rather, given their participation in the whole cultural system of presentation and representation, they discover conceptions and definitions.

The third chapter deals with Lomazzo, Zuccaro, and Tasso’s dialogue *Il Ficino*, and particularly with Zuccaro’s understanding of *disegno interno* as “an epistemological principle,” as the power — and not a just a power — of the mind which generates all other rational activity, including our ability to define it as a power. Given these self-reflective premises, one might question Williams’ claim in his introduction that “the lingering power of idealism” reflects a consciousness of the fact that “signification is not a natural process but both an arbitrary and a transcendent — a culturally constructed — one.” The Neoplatonic grounds of this argument would seem to undermine the distinction here between “natural” and “transcendent,” in that the natural participates, however imperfectly, in the transcendent construction (which neither Zuccaro nor his fellow theorists interpreted as culturally determined). Even so, this chapter clearly sets out the intricate faculty psychology, especially of the *concetto*, which undergirds these intricate speculations. This is important precisely because of the theorists’ assumption that art encounters and represents ideas and is itself an idea — that it is an object of knowledge and yet the ground of epistemology.

The last chapter turns to Francesco Bocchi’s youthful but sophisticated essays on the visual arts, which synthesize Aristotelian and Platonic arguments. Bocchi

emphasizes the role of the viewer, whose experience of a picture “is always intended to be one of immediate apprehension of the ideal in the real, or of the universal in the particular” (a response that Williams sees as a variety of Platonic *noesis*). The viewer is “possessed by the absolute” and thus “reconstituted” before being moved to action. Bocchi’s reception theory thus nicely complements Lomazzo’s and Zuccaro’s concern with the originating artist’s possession and reconstitution.

The book’s subtitle eventually comes sharply into focus. Art ceases in the sixteenth century to be just “a well-defined technique or set of techniques,” emerging instead as the technique of techniques, the master art, the form of form-making, *metatechne*. Correlatively, subjectivity becomes “essentially a theoretical subjectivity,” since lived experience is now perceived primarily in its relationship to the ideal. Art as an idealizing play of signifiers becomes the way in which the humanists define both common humanity and individual identity, preeminently because they have come to see “all meaning, all knowledge, all identity” as the products of art.

This is a well written, well conceived, provocative study and will fascinate those interested in Renaissance thought, and in the art in, and of, that thought.

MICHAEL J. B. ALLEN, *UCLA*

Sources et fontaines du Moyen Âge à l'âge baroque. Actes du colloque tenu à l'Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, les 28, 29 et 30 novembre 1996. Éd. l'Équipe d'accueil Moyen âge-Renaissance-Baroque. Paris, Champion, 1998. P. 493.

Ces journées d'étude ont permis de mettre en commun les recherches et les réflexions de 24 communicants, des universités françaises, suisses et allemande et d'un conservateur du musée du Louvre, sur un objet polymorphe et complexe, les sources et les fontaines. La double dénomination s'expliquait à la fois par les variations lexicales importantes du Moyen Âge à l'époque baroque et par le souci d'inclure explicitement les deux formes de surgissement de l'élément aqueux, naturel et artificiel. L'édition a distingué trois grands chapitres chronologiques : le Moyen Âge (huit communications portant sur des œuvres littéraires des XII–XIV^e siècles), Renaissance (neuf études portant sur le seul XVI^e siècle mais faisant place tant aux fontaines construites qu'aux sources du monde réel nouvellement exploré, ou aux thèmes et figures littéraires liés aux fontaines), et Âge baroque (sept essais concernant le XVII^e siècle et traitant de la présence du motif dans les jardins réels, dans les divers genres littéraires — éloquence religieuse, poésie pétrarquaisante, roman courtisan ou galant — dans la pastorale et la musique et dans la mise en scène d'opéras). Mais si le corpus des objets et des textes se situait entre le XII^e et le XVII^e