RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne
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Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, eds, *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 371 pp., 82 black-and-white illus., 1 table, $75.00 Cdn, ISBN 0-521-82688-8

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Greenberg's 1964 visits to "frigid" Toronto and to the prairies as "an aimless ramble through a barren frozen landscape," rather than as an encounter that Canadian artists themselves often viewed as of great value to their work

Greenberg's reputation rests in large measure on his justifiably celebrated "eye," which often led him to arresting judgments, but Marquis, by and large, is blind to it. Perhaps, for instance, Michelangelo was not better as a painter than a sculptor as Greenberg argued he was, but today almost no one would seriously question that Courbet exemplifies "a new flatness ... and an equally new attention to every inch of the canvas, regardless of its relation to the 'centers of interest'"[13] – an observation Greenberg owed to the German critic, Julius Meier-Graefe, for whom he had a particularly high regard – yet Marquis grudgingly grants only that Greenberg "purports" to see such qualities. Lacking in visual intelligence, strangely indifferent to ideas, Marquis has failed to be either complete or fair, and the publication of this book obscures as much as it illuminates. Florence Rubenfeld's biography remains unsurpassed.

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Notes

1 Florence Rubenfeld, *Clement Greenberg, A Life* (New York, 1997).
2 "10 Propositions on the War," *Partisan Review* 8 (1941), 271–78.
3 For the concept of paradigm, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago and London, 1962).
4 See especially Clement Greenberg, "Problems of Criticism II, Complaints of an Art Critic," *Artforum* VI (October 1967), 38–39.
5 Clement Greenberg in conversation with Judith Allsopp, August 1978.
6 John Elderfield, *Frankenthaler* (New York, 1989), 24–31, 34–39.
7 Elderfield, *Frankenthaler*, 65.
8 For a discussion of this issue, see my article, "The Evolution of Jack Bush," *Journal of Canadian Art History* IV (1977–78).
9 For a discussion of Louis's interest in Greenberg's critical suggestions, see John Elderfield, *Morris Louis* (New York, 1987), 77–78.
10 In conversation with the artist, May 1974. Bush said he was rejecting the suggestion, from both Clement Greenberg and Kenworth Moffett, "because they're wrong."
11 Barbara Reise, "Greenberg and the group: a retrospective view, Part 2," *Studio International* 175 (June 1968), 254–57.
12 Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *The Art Biz: The Covert World of Collectors, Dealers, Auction Houses, Museums, and Critics* (Chicago, 1991).
13 Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Partisan Review* 7 (July–August 1940), 296–310.

Stephen J. Campbell and Stephen J. Milner, eds, *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 371 pp., 82 black-and-white illus., 1 table, $75.00 Cdn, ISBN 0-521-82688-8.

This is an important book that will attract not only scholars interested in the Italian Renaissance but possibly others wishing to understand the range of issues associated with artistic exchange, cultural translation, and reception, if one is willing to read laterally and imagine the implications for different areas of study in a transnational context. The forces of exchange and translation are examined here in relation to the idea that Italian states, individuals, and social groups engaged in such strategies in order to negotiate a sense of difference and individualization, as ways of intersecting with various "others" to help define the self (personal or collective). An obvious example of cultural translation would be to consider how Renaissance / early Modern Italians interpreted the past visual cultures of the Greco-Roman world, although this is only a minor note in this volume.

For years many Italianists framed their research within the paradigm of seeing individual cities or regions as distinct; the phenomenon is known in Italian as "*campanilismo*," that is, the sense of identity based on the idea of belonging to a discrete geographic area and being defined by difference from others. Instead, in this book, the case studies examine how people and groups used visual culture in ways that demonstrate mutual interpenetration, recording moments when cultural meanings might change dramatically as a result of the processes of reception and translation. Often the above issues are (rightly) framed within a postcolonial optic that would seem to preclude an investigation of reception, translation, and cultural exchange within a bounded geographic area beginning to have a sense of coherent "national" identity, as was the case with Italy in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Herein lies the value of this book: it prompts us to reconsider how we approach the visual cultures produced in specific locales, looking not so much for closed borders and boundaries but for expressions of fluid and complex senses of identity.

In addition to the thought-provoking theoretical introduction entitled "Art, Identity and Cultural Translation in Renaissance Italy" (pp. 1–13), there are three short, valuable subsections that examine "how to translate" (pp. 15–16); "regional identities and the encounter with Florence" (pp. 135–37); and "negotiating the cultural other" (pp. 271–72). Even in a path-breaking volume like this, scholars appear not to be able to avoid "Florentinitis," and the bias towards Tuscan culture remains constant, although this book does urge us to look at the region

in a new, decentred way; of a total of twelve case studies, eight focus on Florentine or Tuscan material. Like Claire Farago's *Reframing the Renaissance* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995), the scholarship presented here is revisionist in scope, establishing, for instance, that the phenomenon of "rebirth" was just one movement that coexisted with multiple other movements, that Italian states and social groups were characterized by permanent cultural exchange across geographical, religious, cultural, and social boundaries. As the editors state, they hope that the book will prompt others to investigate new ways of looking at traditional material.

At first glance, the four case studies examined in part one are relatively straightforward: the primary focus is on the idea of models, copies, and types that are essentially "translations" of an original. The emphasis, however, is different in that these scholars examine how the translation or transmission process occurred, involving ideas of negotiation and challenge rather than the idea of generation and genealogy.

For example, Michelle O'Malley's essay on subject matters, contracts, designs, and the exchange of ideas between patron and artist in Renaissance art, treats the dialogic process between the two parties, a topic that is undergoing much rethinking these days. She concludes that the commissioning process was much more complex than has been previously assumed, showing that patrons and artists often consulted, collaborated, and worked together in a synergistic exchange that defies simplistic analysis. She examines the references to specific subject matter in various contracts, indicating that artists were not bound to meet this requirement. She suggests that these clauses functioned more as the opening move between a client and artist as the process of exchange developed over time.

Megan Holmes asks what determines a work's exemplary status, resulting in its "translation" into a copy or variant. She studies a Florentine painting workshop active in the second half of the fifteenth century that made unprecedented use of transfer methods to create Marian images for new markets and consumers. As she demonstrates, some of the copied works resonated with viewers because of the connection to the Medici family, for socio-political reasons, for transformative devotional experiences, and as valued luxury objects within a culture of aesthetic display. She shows that the process of translation worked here in many different ways, reminding us of the richness of interpretative results when cultural exchange, translation, and negotiation are the dominant frames of analysis.

Shelly E. Zuraw discusses a Renaissance tomb designed by a Florentine sculptor for a Tuscan cardinal who was buried in the city of Rome. She characterizes this monument as a hybrid work because of the way in which it combines two distinct tomb traditions to create a fascinating new variant in this object class. Her discussion of exchange and translation places the emphasis on the flexibility of the parties involved, as well as the larger cultural purpose of this interconnection. Her essay is followed nicely by Luke Syson's essay on Bertoldo di Giovanni, an artist instrumental in shaping Medicean Florence. This artist was expected to perform like a court artist within a republican context, following models developed in other, authoritative Italian centers, especially the court of Ferrara. Syson demonstrates how Lorenzo apparently prompted his artist to "translate" certain elements within Florentine culture, such as earlier work by Donatello, adapting and adding elements that would help to define his identity along specific lines and assert Medicean authority over the city.

Part two re-evaluates the idea of artistic "influences," in this case, with artists in other locations in Italy looking to the dominant centre of Florence as an authoritative creative source. As the editors point out, the itinerant life of many artists by necessity forced some individuals to align their styles with local idioms and differing regional practices. The first three case studies look at the cultural dialogue between Florence and the states of Ferrara, Bologna, and Naples; the other two examine monuments in Pistoia and San Gimignano, reminding us that at times groups and individuals within subject cities within Florentine dependencies tried to maintain a sense of local autonomy by fostering distinctive cultural/visual economies.

Stephen Campbell's essay discusses the dynamic process of cultural interchange between the court of Ferrara and Medicean Florence. He argues that the Ferrarese employed Florentine artists as part of a critical strategy of "assimilation," based ultimately on the idea that this court center was able to attract the best artists from across Italy and beyond. At the heart of the discussion are ideas about identity and the role of visual culture in creating and maintaining specific perceptions of the ruler, either in Ferrara or Florence. Campbell's analysis of diplomatic, literary, sculptural, and pictorial exchange between these two locations is rooted in the idea that there is a fundamental ambiguity and tension behind all such negotiations of identity, with much slippage across categories.

Georgia Clarke studies Giovanni Bentivoglio's bid for power in Renaissance Bologna, tracing his ideas on urban regeneration, his delight in chivalric ritual, and his commissioning of artworks to construct his identity. Again, the notion of ambiguous identity is paramount, with Bentivoglio studying conditions in Ferrara and Florence, treading a delicate path between single enlightened ruler and pre-eminent citizen in a republican environment, and shaping material culture along these lines. For those interested in the move towards monarchical forms of government during the fifteenth century, Bruce L. Edelstein's essay on garden design in Naples, Florence, and France, demonstrates how a link was forged between absolutist ideals and concepts of the natural world in the kingdom of Naples and

other locations across Europe with similar pretensions. Edelstein argues that the French king Charles VIII copied the royal gardens of the Aragonese in Naples as part of his bid to regain control over this territory and assimilate the authoritative cultural status of the Neapolitan court.

Stephen J. Milner brings out the tensions and problems experienced by those involved in the commission for the tomb of Cardinal Niccolò Forteguerri in Pistoia, as family members, church, and commune sought to negotiate their different, competing needs. Milner exposes how the Medici exploited their patronage networks for this commission, attempting to control the cultural patrimony. He traces the results of this contestation and negotiation in his account of one of the most fractious episodes of patron-artist relations to occur during the Renaissance. Deborah L. Krohn, on the other hand, looks at the cultural dynamic between Florence and San Gimignano, outlining a fascinating case study of Florentine artists being employed to decorate the chapel of Santa Fina in the town center of San Gimignano, yet the work they produced remained purely local in flavour. As she reminds us, there are many factors at work in histories of political subjugation and economic decline. She emphasizes the contribution played by locals in negotiating communal identity whilst seeking the support of prominent Florentines, including Lorenzo de'Medici in the period after 1466, bringing out for us the delicate work required by scholars in assessing complex cultural processes.

The last section examines the idea of the "other," but here it is not religious or geographic difference that is discussed as much as various moments when the self was translated into the "other." Christopher S. Celenza examines ideas of religious orthodoxy in the case of Marsilio Ficino, who attempted to address the foreignness of an admired but historically remote culture, in particular, the writings of Plotinus and the later Platonists. His scholarship drew him increasingly into dangerous territory with regard to traditional religious and philosophical orthodoxies, as well as moving him out of the direct line of influence with important civic leaders in Florence. Celenza describes the complex terrain of the intellectual life of later-fifteenth-century Florence, indicating that individuals like Ficino had to compete in the sociopolitical field with other intellectuals for a place within debates about the canon of new texts and ideas. He characterizes Ficino as pushing and pulling at the borders of intellectual and religious orthodoxies, a decision that ultimately cost him a central role within the Florentine social world. In a very real way, the act of translation and transmission affected his social standing within the community.

Returning to a consideration of material culture, Brian A. Curran traces the impact of Egyptian cultural forms on Pope Leo X's vision of the city of Rome. Curran argues for Leo's desire to appropriate the sovereignty of Egyptian god-kings, a thought-provoking if ultimately unprovable possibility. The collection of essays ends with an essay by Morten Steen Hansen on immigration and church patronage in sixteenth-century Ancona, a town that became a center for international trade in the Adriatic. This last essay might fit best with current thinking about the representation of ethnic or marginal otherness in the period. Hansen's essay traces instances of anti-Semitism in this location, while also demonstrating that other ethnic communities, such as the Armenians, translated their identities and aspirations in material ways more easily assimilated in this location, perhaps because of shared elements of Christian culture. Projections of harmony and continuity, particularly the idea of the containment of Armenian Christianity within Roman Catholicism, helped to shape the creation of altarpieces commissioned by Giorgio Morato (George Mourat in Armenian).

Although potentially confusing, the diversity of approaches to the themes of artistic exchange, translation, and reception is one of the strongest features of this volume. The editors have done a good job of tying the essays together in their structuring of the text with introductory essays and prefatory comments in each section. Each one of the essays does attempt to discuss the key themes in the context of specific historical situations and diverse evidence, with some authors being more articulate than others about the interpretative problems. As the editors state, their hope is that the book will constitute a starting point for other re-evaluations of traditional approaches to Renaissance art and culture. I am grateful to the editors and contributors to this volume for shaping our thinking on how we can begin to re-imagine the complexities of cultural transactions in Renaissance / early Modern Italy.

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Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb, eds, *Singular Women: Writing the Artist*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, 266 pp., 24 black-and-white illus, $35.00 Cdn paperback, $91.00 Cdn hardcover.

In her essay for *Singular Women: Writing the Artist*, Karen Bearor writes that her publisher wanted her book on Irene Rice Pereira (1902–71) "to address a 'general audience' and explicitly requested that any arcane or difficult (read 'post-structuralist') jargon be omitted" (p. 192); however, while Bearor also objects to "impenetrable writing," she worried that scholars and colleagues "might dismiss the book out of hand because it would