

BOOK REVIEW

Philip Cottrell and Peter Humfrey, *Bonifacio de' Pitati*. Ponzano Veneto: Edizioni Zel, 2023. 470 pp. €120.00. ISBN: 9788887186277 (hb).

Bonifacio de' Pitati (1487–1553) occupies a significant position within the framework of Venetian artistic development, symbolizing a figure emblematic of the transitional dynamics between successive cohorts of painters. Evident in his early artistic output is a discernible engagement with the stylistic conventions associated with Palma il Vecchio (1480–1528), while documentary sources shed light on his close connection with Lorenzo Lotto (1480–1556). Moreover, Pitati's oeuvre bears witness to a persistent aspiration towards achieving parity with the eminent mastery of Titian (active about 1506; died 1576), indicative of the competitive spirit that marked the Venetian artistic sphere. Conversely, his later compositions demonstrate an evolution characterized by stylistic maturation, wherein the foundational achievements of Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594) find resonance. Pitati's work thus signals a continuum of influence and creative exchange across generational divides within the community of Venetian painters.

In light of these connections this elegantly illustrated volume, co-authored by Philip Cottrell and Peter Humfrey, assumes a pivotal role within the scholarly discourse about Pitati and Venetian painting more generally. Dorothee Westphal's *Bonifacio Veronese*, issued in Munich in 1931, was until now the only comprehensive examination of the painter. Subsequent to Westphal's work, a number of essays and studies have emerged, shedding light on various aspects of Pitati's personal and professional life. However, due to the significant temporal gap between the two monographs, the present volume fills a noteworthy void, offering a contemporary reassessment and synthesis of the master's legacy within the broader context of Venetian Renaissance art.

The volume represents the culmination of the collaborative scholarly endeavours of the two authors. Cottrell's doctoral dissertation, completed under Humfrey's supervision in 2000, serves as the foundational work for this project. Structured into two sections, the volume features essays authored by Cottrell that delve into the life and artistic contributions of Bonifacio de' Pitati, while Humfrey has compiled an extensive catalogue of the paintings. Additionally, both authors curated supplementary materials for the volume: Cottrell oversaw the appendice containing all known documents related to Bonifacio, providing transcriptions and commentary, while Humfrey managed a registry of artists attached to Pitati's workshop. Notably, the two authors candidly acknowledge minor points of disagreement, ensuring that readers remain receptive to the diverse strands of research presented.

With his extensive prior publications on Pitati, Cottrell brings a wealth of authoritative knowledge in the initial section of the volume. The introductory chapter delineates

the trajectory of scholarly inquiry into the painter, from sixteenth-century sources to the intriguing nineteenth-century creation of three figures named Bonifacio in order to explain the artist's stylistic evolution. Subsequently, Cottrell shifts towards an analysis of Pitati's extensive career. This entails a chronological examination, and, at the same time, involves an exploration of the thematic breadth of works originating from the painter and his workshop, encompassing a range from domestic religious compositions to mythological paintings. A chapter on Pitati's decoration of the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi, the Venetian treasury building, spanning the period between 1529 and 1553, shows the painter's distinguished standing within the artistic milieu. At the same time, the analysis of this important commission offers a discerning perspective into Pitati's flourishing atelier, which accommodated local as well as immigrant artists like the Dalmatian Stefano Cernotto. Significantly, this chapter includes several original reconstructive diagrams illustrating Pitati's extensive decorations, thereby offering a thorough view on his artistic endeavour.

Humfrey's contribution to the volume encompasses a comprehensive catalogue raisonné, meticulously curated and expertly presented, that provides an extensive overview of the painter's legacy. Positioned after the textual component, this section underscores Humfrey's profound expertise and steadfast commitment to cataloguing and analysing Pitati's extensive oeuvre, encompassing 200 works, while also laying the groundwork for future investigations. Its organization is both intuitive and scholarly, facilitating seamless navigation through a diverse array of artworks and enabling deeper engagement with each individual piece. Detailed descriptions, insightful commentary and high-quality reproductions further enrich the reader's understanding and appreciation of the featured paintings, offering a rich tapestry of sources that enhances the scholarly discourse on Pitati considerably. Importantly, the catalogue incorporates several recent discoveries, thoroughly examined and illustrated for the first time. These findings highlight the significant contribution of the catalogue and suggest the untapped potential for further exploration and research.

The volume stands as a paradigm of collaborative authorship by providing a nuanced examination of Pitati's multifaceted artistic trajectory, and elucidating the intricate interplay of influences, aspirations and stylistic evolution that characterize his oeuvre. Through meticulous analysis and contextualization, the publication offers invaluable insights into the dynamic cultural and artistic landscape of Renaissance Venice, positioning Bonifacio de' Pitati, a painter overshadowed by the prominence of other contemporaneous artists and subsequently overlooked by scholars, as a central protagonist in the unfolding narrative of Venetian artistic development.