

## Book Reviews

**The Wallace Collection's Pictures. A Complete Catalogue.** By Stephen Duffy and Jo Hedley. 554 pp. incl. 832 col. pls. + 15 b. & w. ills. (Unicorn Press and Lindsay Fine Art, London, 2004), £50. ISBN 0-906290-38-4.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER LLOYD  
*The Royal Collection*

CATALOGUES ARE A good way of determining the state of health of a collection. Judging by the number published over the years devoted to different parts of the Wallace Collection there need be no fears for the condition of Hertford House in Manchester Square. This is particularly so in the case of the pictures for which some form of catalogue, often extending into numerous editions and subject to regular revisions, has been available since 1900. The accumulation of knowledge gleaned by such scholars as Claude Phillips, D.S. MacColl, Philip Hendy and Francis Watson culminated in the four volumes (1985-92) compiled by John Ingamells, which incorporated a prodigious amount of new research. To a considerable extent this new publication builds upon Ingamells's achievements, but has a distinctive character of its own.

The publication's laudable purpose is straightforward, namely to provide a convenient one-volume catalogue of all the paintings, watercolours and drawings in the Wallace Collection illustrated with colour reproductions. The introduction outlines the now familiar history of the collection, incorporating biographical information on the Marquesses of Hertford, particularly the 3rd and 4th, and Richard Wallace, as well as observations on the changing history of taste, which is such a crucial factor in understanding the formation of the collection.

One reason for the popularity of the Wallace Collection today is the renewal of interest in French eighteenth-century painting and nineteenth-century academic art. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see how until 1872 Richard Wallace's purchases complemented the existing collection and at the same time extended it in new directions as, for example, in his acquisition of the beautiful *An idyll: Daphnis and Chloe* now attributed to Niccolò Pisano (c.1500-01; cat. no.P2); *An allegory of love* by the Master of Santo Spirito (c.1490-95; no.P556), or *An allegory of true love* by Pieter Pourbus (c.1547; no.P531), all of which prefigure the subject-matter of French eighteenth-century painting. Similarly, even among the purchases made by the 4th Marquess, who admired French, Dutch, Flemish, Spanish and British paintings from different centuries, there can be discerned certain, perhaps unconscious, thematic links: thus, for instance, between works by Boucher or Fragonard and the remarkable *Francesca da Rimini* by Ary Scheffer (no.P316), or between Snyders (no.P72), Weenix (nos.P59, 69, 87, 91,

98, 102-03 and 124, 140-42, 174 and 182) and Oudry (nos.P625-27 and 629-31).

It is, in fact, the reclusive 4th Marquess (1800-70) whose collecting instincts enthrall us today. There is much that fascinates: his judgments on pictures swing from a curious indifference (Rubens; no.P63) to a passionate adherence (Watteau; no.P389); his determination to outbid even his richest rivals was prodigious (Velázquez; no.P88, and Hals; no.P84); his respect for the provenance of a picture is a recurring feature, as is the innate sense of quality in the context of his time; his desire for anonymity which was so rapidly negated by his reputation as a collector at the top end of the market; and his unerring instinct for when a picture might become available (Wouwermans; no.P65). The correspondence with his agent, Samuel Mawson, is the revealing source for many of these traits.

The writing of a catalogue is an art form, and Stephen Duffy and Jo Hedley possess the requisite skills in abundance. The entries are perfectly pitched for both scholar and art lover alike. Although a large part of the essential critical apparatus remains in the volumes published by Ingamells, the authors here assess new literature, new technical information and hazard new interpretations. As a result, the entries are fresh and stimulating even for those who know these pictures well, and there are twenty-nine changes of attribution from the volumes of 1985-89. One advantage that curators of great collections have is the opportunity to know the works in their keeping better than anyone else, and this is amply demonstrated in this catalogue. Detailed knowledge and a thorough understanding of the artists in question shines through, and Duffy and Hedley rise to the challenges set by the greatest paintings in the collection. Their own observations on style and iconography are illuminating, infectious and wonderfully readable, as well as being spiced with apposite quotations from a variety of sources. There was apparently a certain diffidence about including biographies of the artists, but the decision to do so is justified by the skill with which these have been written and the information they contain. For example, there is the high suicide rate among artists represented in the collection - Lemoyne, Mayer, Léopold Robert and Emanuel de Witte. This is only matched by the numerous links between painting and literature - Greuze (no.P384), Hals (no.P84), Lawrence (no.P559) and, of course, Poussin (no.P108), quite apart from the three portraits of the feminist writer Mrs Robinson by Gainsborough (no.P42), Reynolds (no.P45) and Romney (no.P37). In fact, this is such a well-informed catalogue that it instinctively points towards many other areas of further research. Accessibility is the stated purpose and it has been achieved in an exemplary fashion thanks to clear, intelligent writing and an obvious enthusiasm for the task. If people think that catalogue writing is dull they should read this volume.

The Unicorn Press has established a reputation for 'library' editions of catalogues of collections, including the National Gallery

(1995), the Dulwich Picture Gallery (1998) and the National Portrait Gallery (2004). The production values of the present volume (designed by Gillian Greenwood) are high, apart from the small matter of the right-hand sides of the columns in the entries not being justified and there are some inaccuracies in the cross-referencing from the entries to the roman pagination of the introduction. It is a pity that there is no index of previous owners, as in Ingamells, but in the final analysis this catalogue is a triumph.

**Private collectors in Mantua, 1500-1630.** By Guido Rebecchini. 494 pp. with 43 b. & w. ills. (Sussidi Eruditi, 56, Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 2002), €65.50. ISBN 88-8498-049-6.

Reviewed by JANE MARTINEAU

GENERATIONS OF SCHOLARS have trawled the archives at Mantua, understandably concentrating on documents relating to the Gonzaga family and particularly on their great court painters Andrea Mantegna and Giulio Romano. More recently Raffaella Morselli and her team of archivists have focused on the Gonzaga collections from the mid-sixteenth century to 1627.<sup>1</sup> Now Guido Rebecchini has turned his attention to the far less studied notarial archives and to the Mantuan courtiers and their collections. His discoveries are remarkable.

Some of the works from these private collections were shown in the Gonzaga exhibition held in Mantua in 2002,<sup>2</sup> to which Rebecchini also contributed, but in this book he follows individual collections through the inventories over several generations. He conveys the feel of a small court society, in which everyone knew each other or was related. All the characters in this book depended on ducal employment to amass the fortunes necessary to fund a collecting 'habitat' and, while their collections sometimes mirrored on a minor scale those of their masters, in some cases the influence flowed the other way; certainly Baldassarre Castiglione, Nicola Maffei the Elder and Giulio Romano did much to shape the taste of Duke Federico. There is a certain inevitability, given the Gonzaga family's voracious passion for collecting, that the greatest works from the private collections ended up in the Palazzo Ducale, whether by gift, enforced donation, reluctant sale or seizure.

Rebecchini has produced a mass of new and important material, but inevitably there is a degree of frustration in the interpretation of inventories. While compilers are often conscientious in naming the room in which a picture was hung, they are less reliable in providing the name of the artist or title of a painting: frequently Rebecchini is tantalised by such phrases as '*più quadri diversi tra grandi e piccoli numero 101*'.

Mantua was a provincial town; to see and buy objects it was necessary to travel, although

occasionally a specialist arrived there, such as the jeweller and merchant Matteo del Nassaro who in 1535 brought from Flanders three hundred Flemish paintings, including numerous landscapes (120 were snapped up by Duke Federico). Nicola Maffei the elder (1487–1536) had a passion for antiquity which he cultivated on his diplomatic visits on behalf of the Gonzaga to Naples and Rome – he wrote to Isabella d'Este (with whom he competed over purchases) that he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Apollo Belvedere – and he sold a velvet mantle to buy marble heads. The Maffei collection was famous enough to have been mentioned by Vasari, although it is open to doubt if he saw any of these collections on his four-day visit to Giulio Romano at Mantua in the autumn of 1541 or even on his later visit in 1566. It would have been worth his while, for in the Maffei house in the Contrada Montenegro, there were 129 paintings and thirty-one works of sculpture, all listed in an inventory made after the death of Nicola Maffei's grandson, another Nicola, in 1589. A 'sala grande' contained official paintings – portraits of the Emperor Charles V, for instance – and a bedroom had family portraits and religious works, but in the chief bedroom on the ground floor, listed with the walnut bedstead and the mattresses, were sixteen paintings, including two 'di man del Correggio' – the *Education of Cupid* (National Gallery, London) and *Venus, Cupid and a satyr*, and Titian's *Supper at Emmaus* (both Musée du Louvre, Paris), probably all acquired by Nicola the Elder. The greatest paintings in the collection eventually ended up in Gonzaga hands, although payment was slow to follow.

Baldassarre Castiglione, a close friend of Nicola Maffei the Elder, served Federico Gonzaga as a diplomat in Rome and, from 1524, as papal nuncio to the Emperor Charles V in Spain. The state of his books was a recurring worry to him, for they were being ruined by smoke or dust, or eaten by rats. Rebecchini publishes a remarkable inventory of Castiglione's library – it contained more works by Erasmus than by any other contemporary – and an account of his memorial service held in Toledo in February 1529. Curiously absent from the library inventory is a copy of *Il libro del cortegiano*, published in April 1528; Rebecchini wonders if its author ever saw it in print. There are two inventories of Castiglione's collection made in 1529 and 1530, when his effects were returned from Spain. Again, the vagaries of the compilers are frustrating; presumably Raphael's portrait of Castiglione is among the 'retratti in tela numero sette' listed in 1529 since it was still with the family in Mantua in 1588. The 1530 list includes a chain given to Castiglione in London by Henry VII, and lizards and beetles made of silver; perhaps they were devised by Giulio Romano.

Ludovico Strozzi was Castiglione's brother-in-law and, besides arranging his memorial service in Toledo, he also acted as a witness to Giulio Romano's will in 1546. An inventory of 1582 lists the most valuable possessions in the Strozzi house: the jewels and precious

stones kept in three gilded chests in Pompeo's bedroom; the paintings, which included copies of Titian's series of Roman emperors (common to several Mantuan collections); and, most remarkably, two large and one small 'cartoni di chiaro e scuro di Michel Angelo', that is, sections of the Cascina cartoon which were said by Vasari to be in Mantua in the 1550 edition of his *Lives*. Rebecchini traces the lingering influence of those fragments to the early seventeenth century, when Rubens was in Mantua working for the Gonzaga.

Like other members of his family, Giovan Giacomo Calandra (1478–1543) served the Gonzaga as *Castellano*. His letters tell us much about life at court since, charged with the care of all Gonzaga buildings, he wrote frequently to Mantegna, Bonsignori, Costa and Giulio, and also knew the intellectuals and writers of the court, including Mario Equicola, Pietro Bembo and Castiglione. The studio in the Calandra household contained the largest library in Mantua apart from the duke's: bronze figurines, a genealogy of the Gonzaga, a terracotta copy of the *Spinario*, astrolabes, and a *Virgin and Child* attributed to Giulio Romano – all seem to mirror the description of the ideal room by G.B. Armenini in his book *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1586), dedicated to Duke Guglielmo. The family's most important painting was a *Mary Magdalene*, given to Giovan Giacomo by Titian for his help over a land deal. One of Rebecchini's most remarkable discoveries in an inventory of 1591 is the existence of a foundry in a *bottega* at street level in the Calandra house, containing stucco 'figurines, heads, arms, feet, busts, horses heads', eleven incised bronze sheets, and the tools and equipment of the type that Cellini describes in his autobiography. It seems it was used for moulding and casting medals and figurines. Possibly Giovan Giacomo Calandra the younger was an amateur sculptor (p.177), but presumably the Calandra employed professional workers as well.

Marcello Donati (1538–1602) may have inherited his love of the arts from his father, the goldsmith Ettore Donati, who had created gold and silverware to Giulio's designs and also witnessed his will. Marcello trained as a doctor and, on marrying the widow (over thirty years his senior) of the Mantuan court physician, first took on his predecessor's role, then that of tutor to the young Duke Vincenzo, eventually being appointed his secretary and counsellor of state. Donati delighted in classical literature, formed a library of some 1,200 volumes, and owned seventy-seven paintings, as well as thirty works of antique sculpture which he displayed in a garden scented with myrtle, orange trees and jasmine, with three elaborate fountains, antique statues and walls adorned with antique inscriptions. The entire collection of antiquities was left by Donati to Duke Vincenzo, while his medals went to the Duchess Eleonora. Rebecchini makes a good case for identifying some of the pieces that entered Charles I's collection, and draws attention to a painting in the Donati house of 'Our Saviour when he descends to hell about one braccio square'

(p.192), possibly identifiable with a painting by Mantegna.

Whereas the Maffei and Castiglione were long established noble families, Donati and Annibale Chieppio (1563–1623) were rich careerists. Chieppio served as Duke Guglielmo's secretary, amassed a fortune, acquired a title, and bought and furnished a palace (on the site of Palazzo d'Arco) before his fall and imprisonment in 1616. The inventory of his collection, published in full for the first time, is rich in ornate furniture: a desk of ebony and ivory; another with colonnettes of crystal; gems; medals; and a brass 'doll that danced by herself'. Of the 302 paintings in his collection only one is attributed: to Mantegna, with the curious title of 'the three graces and old Mantua' (p.208).

In 1630, after a terrible siege, Mantua was brutally sacked for three days by imperial troops, and one can only guess how much was lost from private collections. Although in its presentation Rebecchini's book has not cast off the vestiges of its origin as a doctoral thesis, the rich material it contains, with extensive appendices of documents, family trees, bibliography and index to titles of works of art, makes it a remarkable achievement.

<sup>1</sup> Recently Raffaella Morselli and her colleagues have been publishing the Gonzaga inventories from 1540 to 1627 in the series *Le collezioni Gonzaga*.

<sup>2</sup> R. Morselli, ed.: exh. cat. *Gonzaga. La Celeste Galleria: Le raccolte*, Mantua (Palazzo Te) 2002.

**Dirck Hals 1591–1656. Œuvre und Entwicklung eines Haarlemer Genremalers.** By Britta Nehlsen-Marten. 420 pp. with 262 b. & w. ill. (VDG, Weimar, 2003), €70.20. ISBN 3-89739-357-3.

Reviewed by ELMER KOLFIN  
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PRODUCING A CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ of a seventeenth-century genre painter who made thousands of fairly similar paintings which are based on the same, constantly repeated motifs is no easy task. However, the critic must judge the result, not the effort. Unfortunately in this case the result is rather disappointing.

The Haarlem painter of high-life scenes Dirck Hals (1591–1656) is undoubtedly one of the more important painters of the early seventeenth century. He succeeded in transforming the popular sixteenth-century motif of the merry company into a genre that became immensely successful. Painters from Enkhuizen to Middelburg and from Utrecht to Haarlem followed his lead. Together with fellow painters of merry companies such as Pieter Codde, Jacob Duck and Anthonie Palamedesz, Dirck Hals laid the basis for some of the most beautiful genre paintings of the Dutch Golden Age, such as those by Gerard ter Borch, Johannes Vermeer and Frans van Mieris the Elder; in so doing, he surely deserves thorough study.