

美术史与观念史

范景中 曹意强 刘 赦 主编

XIII

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HISTORY
OF ART
AND
HISTORY
OF IDEAS

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序 言

夫史者，筆載也，圖載也；求直也，求知也。載籍既存，人類之記憶不滅。雖其人云亡，而其事如在，使後之學者，坐披囊篋，心存千載，摩挲陳編，溯覽百代。此亦求知之一道也。

美術史者，史之一幅也。雖然，尋繁領雜，務信棄奇，明白頭訖，品酌事例，其揆一也；然終以圖像爲指歸，以立載筆之準的。而析理賞覽，探蹟索隱，又以觀念史爲羽翼。蓋非立言無以明其理，非立言無以測其奧；而言之精粹者，觀念也。圖像之妙，非言不津；津言之妙，非像不傳；臻此極境，洵史之美輪美奐者也。但若貴琦辭，賤文獻，廢閣舊籍，鬻爲敗紙，或才翻史略，即楮成文，鑿空立義，任情失正，則亦殆矣。

Ruskin 曾云：*Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last.* 誠哉斯言！史之爲任也重矣！秉筆荷擔，學者負之，邁迹往昔，昭其業績，於是，《美術史與觀念史》出焉。然繩愆匡謬，討論是正，俾其成人文科學之翼宣盛美者，則以俟君子襄事焉。先哲有言：其作始也簡，其將畢也必巨。其是之謂乎？是爲序。

范景中 曹意強 壬午八月

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Giorgione and the Development of European Art History

Charles Hope

1. The Creation of Giorgione's Reputation

The most important theme in Ernst Gombrich's work was his study of "some of the fundamental functions of the visual arts in their psychological implications". But his contribution cannot of course be limited to this single area, and there are some other aspects of his work that can and should provide lessons for all art historians, some of which I hope will be reflected in my lectures.

One major branch of art history that interested Gombrich very little was connoisseurship, the practice of attributing works of art to particular artists on the basis of their style. This did not mean that he did not think it was important to know who had made individual works of art. He was certainly well aware, for example, that we inevitably think differently about a painting if we suppose it to be by Raphael or by some extremely minor follower. Gombrich grew up at a time when connoisseurship was particularly prestigious, and he knew and admired a number of scholars working in museums who had devoted their lives to the study of specific groups of objects, and whose activity necessarily involved connoisseurship. But it is clear that he thought that what they did contributed relatively little to our understanding of the art of the past, and that, however necessary it might be, it was not in any sense history. To the best of my

knowledge, the only piece that he published on connoisseurship, a short article written towards the end of his life, was a rather laboured parody, in which he showed how one might argue, by considering the similarity between arms and legs and other details, that a figure on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was not by Michelangelo but by Raphael. This demonstrates, I think, how irritated he was by the way connoisseurship was practiced by those without any real insight into the works they were studying or the period in which these were produced.

Given Gombrich's low opinion of connoisseurship, it may seem surprising that I have chosen as the subject of these lectures Giorgione, whose career raises more problems of attribution than that of any other major Italian artist. But I believe that the topic has much to tell us about how European art history has developed over the past five centuries, and how it is practiced today. Giorgione died relatively young in Venice, and he became famous very soon after his death. But over the centuries, ideas about what he had painted changed very dramatically. Even today, there remains much greater uncertainty about this than is the case with any other major European artist. Estimates by modern scholars of the number of surviving pictures by him vary between about five and forty, and the scholars who agree on the attribution of individual works often disagree about their chronology. This is not because the pictures under debate look very similar. On the contrary, they look extraordinarily different. Here are some pictures that some art historians today believe to be by Giorgione, shown to the same scale; and here are some more, at half the scale of the others. Beyond the fact that they are all painted in oils, it is difficult to see what most of them have in common. Yet they are supposed to have been produced by one artist in little more than a decade; and it has proved entirely impossible to arrange all, or even

most of them, in a convincing sequence.

This is puzzling, because one of the basic ideas of art history is that each artist worked in a recognizable style, and with a comprehensible stylistic development. That is why, of course, we do not normally confuse the work of Michelangelo with that of Raphael. Indeed, if artists did not have a distinctive style of their own, it would be impossible to do connoisseurship at all. Artists, as Gombrich taught us, do not simply paint what is before their eyes; they use formulae, or schemata, to represent heads or bodies, or landscapes or drapery. And that is why there is a certain family resemblance even in the paintings of a portraitist such as Van Dyck. But the pictures now commonly attributed to Giorgione do not seem to be in a single style; and the range of different styles in which he is supposed to have worked during his short career is far greater than that of any other major artist over a comparable period. Thus the style of Giovanni Bellini, who was probably his teacher, did not vary very much over more than 35 years. The styles of Palma Vecchio and Titian, to name two Venetian artists slightly younger than Giorgione, also changed very little over long periods; and the same could be said of any other Venetian artist of the Renaissance, or for that matter of any artist working elsewhere in Italy.

In books on Giorgione, of which there are many, there is very little discussion of this problem, if any at all. Art historians seem to agree that he alone among Italian artists changed his style almost from picture to picture. And as a result they also seem to believe that to decide what he painted is largely a matter of guesswork, or of relying on the views of others. If you look at catalogue entries on individual pictures, these almost always consist of little more than lists of names of those experts who believe the work in question to be by Giorgione, and of those who do

not. This is a not very strong kind of argument for deciding if any particular picture is by him, but in most cases it is the best that we have. So far as I can see, most of those who write on Giorgione are content to accept this situation; but I am not, and I think that Gombrich would not have been, either. He would have wanted to see arguments based on something more substantial, and that is what I shall try to provide.

The best way of approaching the problem, I believe, is to look historically at the study of Giorgione, seeing how and why ideas about him changed over the centuries. The advantage of this approach is that we can then understand why art historians of the past said what they did about him, and why certain pictures came to be associated with his name, while others were rejected or overlooked. Only then can we appreciate whether current ideas about Giorgione are based on a rich and developing tradition, which reflects increases in knowledge, or whether instead unfounded speculation and simple ignorance lie behind many ideas about him that are now accepted without question. And in adopting such an approach, I shall try to take nothing about Giorgione for granted, even matters which most scholars today do not think are worth examining. I hope that, despite their narrow theme, these lectures will illustrate some very broad problems in the history of European art.

By way of introduction, it may be useful to summarise the historical information about Giorgione that has come to light since about 1800, mostly in the form of documents. In a handful of documents dating from his lifetime and soon afterwards, he is always called George of Castelfranco, Castelfranco being a very small town about 30 kms northeast of Venice. In the winter of 1507—1508, he provided a picture of an unspecified subject for an audience chamber in the Ducal Palace,

the seat of the Venetian government, which was almost certainly removed or destroyed in 1557, when the room was demolished. In 1507 or 1508 he also painted some frescoes on the outside of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the warehouse of the German merchants in Venice, located on the Grand Canal next to the Rialto bridge. There was some disagreement about his fee for this work, but the details of the dispute are obscure. We also know that he died of plague in the autumn of 1510. This information comes from a letter of Isabella d'Este, the wife of the ruler of Mantua, who asked a merchant in Venice to try to obtain a painting of a night scene, which was apparently very unusual, and which she thought had been left in the artist's studio. In his reply her correspondent in Venice said that no such picture was in the studio. He mentioned that two people in Venice owned works of this type by George, but said that neither picture was for sale. Isabella made great efforts to obtain pictures by the very best modern artists in Italy, so her interest in the work of George of Castelfranco is indicative of his high reputation.

Very recently a new document came to light, dating from March 1511. Without going into the details, this shows beyond reasonable doubt that George was the son of a man from Castelfranco called Giovanni, and that he was the same person as one mentioned in various documents about Castelfranco published about a century ago. Taking this material together, we now know that George was a member of the Barbarelli family of Castelfranco, that his father died between 1483 and 1485, and that in 1489, for reasons we do not know, he was in prison in Venice; and by 1500 he had definitively left Castelfranco. It is clear from these facts that he was born no later than the 1470s.

Further information about him is contained in a series of notes compiled mostly in the 1520s by a Venetian patrician named

Marcantonio Michiel, listing the contents of various private collections in Venice. We will look at these notes in more detail in another lecture. Here I would merely say that Michiel is known to have been unusually interested in and knowledgeable about art, and that for this reason his remarks deserve to be taken very seriously. He lists about fifteen works by George of Castelfranco in Venetian collections, including portraits and pictures with landscape settings, some religious and some non-religious. And it is clear from what Michiel says that George's works were greatly prized by Venetian collectors, including Michiel himself.

To summarise: we know that George was born before 1480 in Castelfranco, that he had left there definitively by 1500, and in 1507 was working in Venice, where he died in 1510. By that time his works were in demand among collectors. He also had at least one very visible work on public display, the frescoes on the Fondaco, which unfortunately disappeared long ago. This is a rather small amount of information, but it is something to bear in mind as we examine the things that people said about him between his death and about 1800, when the first of the texts that I have just discussed was published, namely the notes of Michiel.

In the rest of the lecture I will look at what was written about Giorgione in the sixty years or so after his death, but before doing so I want to make what may seem a very obvious point, which is perhaps why it is seldom if ever mentioned. Anyone who has read a general book on Italian art is likely to be better informed about the art of the Renaissance than almost anyone alive in Italy before 1550, except perhaps a few professional artists. Today any student would be expected to know the names of the leading artists, and to have some idea of what their works look like, and perhaps where they can be seen. But that kind of

information was not available to educated Italians before 1550. There were almost no guidebooks, and no modern books on art, ancient or modern. The names of a few outstanding artists were recorded in other kinds of text. The largest list appears in the introduction to an edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* published in Florence in 1481. This contains a long account of famous citizens of Florence, including some painters and sculptors. Other painters are occasionally named in a book summarizing the history of the world that appeared in many editions. And an eight-page guidebook to Florence, including brief references to works of art in the main churches and palaces, was published in 1510, but never reprinted. More common were guidebooks to Rome. These concentrated on religious objects of interest to pilgrims, and to some extent on ancient buildings and statues, but sometimes included very brief references to more recent works of art. The situation began to change from the 1530s, with the appearance of printed collections of letters of modern writers, such as those of Titian's great friend Pietro Aretino, who often referred to artists he knew, including of course Titian himself.

The result of all this was that by the 1540s many educated and literate people in Italy knew the names of some outstanding modern artists, such as Titian, Michelangelo and Raphael. They also knew the names of a few famous artists of antiquity such as Apelles and Zeuxis, who had been mentioned by Pliny and a few other ancient writers. To most people the names of the ancient artists meant rather more than those of the modern ones, because of the stories associated with them. Apelles was the favourite painter of Alexander the Great, who as a mark of favour gave him his mistress Campaspe; Zeuxis, summoned by the citizens of Croton to paint a picture of a woman of outstanding beauty, said by different writers to have been either Venus or Helen of Troy,

solved the problem by selecting the five most beautiful young women of Croton and combining the best parts of each of them—the head of one, the torso of another and so on. This story was particularly popular in Italy, since it was taken to be an allegory of art, implying that artists should not imitate nature, but surpass it, as Zeuxis had done.

Such anecdotes were only rarely reported about modern artists, but their names sometimes came up when a parallel was being drawn between painting and some other art form. It is in this context that Giorgione was first mentioned in print, in one of the best-selling Italian books of the sixteenth century, the *Cortegiano*, or *Book of the Courtier*, of Baldassare Castiglione, published in Venice in 1528. The *Cortegiano* is a fictional conversation set at the court of Urbino in 1507, in which various people discuss the qualities required for a courtier, and more generally offer guidance about conduct in the polite society. When the conversation turns to the topic of literary style, and to the question of whether it is better to imitate a single famous author or several, one of the speakers draws a parallel with painting. “In painting Leonardo da Vinci, Mantegna, Raphael, Michelangelo, and George of Castelfranco are outstanding. None the less, each works in a very different way, so that none of them appears to lack anything in his own style, because it is known that each is perfect in his own way.”

Castiglione was born in Mantua, then lived for some years in Urbino and then moved to Rome. He probably had first-hand knowledge of works by most and perhaps all of these artists, and the same could even have been true of some of the other people whose names he used in his dialogue. But whether anyone could realistically have made a remark of this kind even in sophisticated company as early as 1507 is open to question, not least because no painting by Michelangelo was on public

display at that date. He and Raphael were much better known by about 1516, when the passage in question was written. If we ask what Castiglione's remark would have meant to most of his readers, the answer must be that it can have meant almost nothing, since few of those readers can have had any idea of what the works of all five outstanding artists actually looked like. Depending on where they lived they might have seen something by one or two of the artists, but they might well not have been able to identify the artist in question by name. This is why we should not be surprised by an intelligent German who visited Rome in 1532, and noted in his diary that he had seen the marvellous painted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Raphael. He knew that the ceiling was famous, he knew that Raphael was a famous modern artist whose works were in Rome; but that was all that he knew.

Castiglione's comment about George of Castelfranco seems to have aroused almost no interest; and I can find no reference to it in later writing about the artist before the twentieth century. His name next appeared in a dialogue on painting by a rather obscure Venetian artist named Paolo Pino, published in 1548; and here he was called Giorgione—big George—rather than George of Castelfranco, and was mentioned twice. The first time is in a list of famous modern artists, which includes all those mentioned by Castiglione, together with Giotto, Perugino, Giovanni Bellini, Durer and Titian. The second time is in a discussion of a familiar theme at the period—the question of which was better, painting or sculpture. Here we are told that “Giorgione of Castelfranco, our most celebrated painter, no less worthy of honour than the ancients” had painted a picture of St George in armour, beside a stream and a mirror, so that the figure could be seen simultaneously from three sides, something that sculptors could not match. We may

question whether there is any truth in the story, especially as a visitor to Venice about ten years earlier, the Portuguese painter Francesco d'Hollanda, had evidently heard the same anecdote, but told about another artist. For Pino, Giorgione was an outstanding painter, but it does not follow that he knew much about him; and his readers would not have learned anything of any significance from his text, and least of all where they could see his work or why it was special.

The same could have been said of all the major artists of the period, and in the next year, 1549, two writers tried to remedy the situation, by publishing short books about artists which included some indications of where their works could be seen. One was a doctor named Michelangelo Biondo. He wrote very briefly about some twenty painters, but did not mention Giorgione. By modern standards, he was not very well informed. Thus among the works he said were by Mantegna was the *Last Supper* in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, which is of course by Leonardo da Vinci. The other writer was Anton Francesco Doni, who printed a number of his own letters as an appendix to a treatise that he had written on art. One of these letters gave a list of the outstanding works of art to be seen in Florence, the other of major works in other parts of Italy. Among notable works in Venice Doni mentioned "the things by Giorgione", but did not say where these were to be found.

The situation was entirely transformed by Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, published in Florence in 1550, and again, in a much enlarged form, in 1568. The first edition contains about 140 biographies of artists of varying length, arranged chronologically, with some additional material; and more biographies were included in the second edition. Vasari's *Lives* is certainly the most influential book on the history of art in Europe ever

written, and as a result he is often considered as the father of art history. But it does not follow that his book can be judged by the standards of modern art history, although this point is often overlooked. In particular, the question of how Vasari actually collected his information about his chosen artists, and how it was then incorporated in the text, has not been much discussed.

Many scholars believe that an Austrian art historian named Wolfgang Kallab already answered this question, in a book called *Vasaristudien*, which appeared in 1908. Because Kallab had died suddenly following an accident, his friend Julius von Schlosser made arrangements for the publication of the text, which was never finished. Schlosser once told Gombrich that he had never compiled an index because Kallab's book was so important that he expected art historians to read every word; but, as Gombrich later explained to me, "the truth of the matter was that Schlosser was too lazy". As a result, Kallab's uncompleted text is not easy to consult; and of course it is written in German, which many European art historians read less well than they should.

The most impressive part of Kallab's text is a detailed analysis of how Vasari used various manuscript sources about the history of art in Florence and Tuscany and how he could have collected other information in his book which does not appear in these sources. Kallab's analysis is broadly convincing, but he failed to investigate in detail some very basic questions, in particular whether Vasari was the sole author of the book that appeared under his name. This last question has hardly ever been discussed.

In the autobiography that Vasari included in the second edition, he gave an explanation of how the project had arisen. In the summer of