

and fantasy' (p.17). The war drawings have been covered in two publications and numerous exhibitions and catalogues of war artists, but Alan Powers provides an intelligent summary of Ardizzone's war.

Ardizzone's commercial work, executed under the name Diz, is covered in one chapter. Although he was deprecatory about this work, it pushed him to find solutions to new problems and directed him to alter his style, albeit modestly. He illustrated company posters, film posters, Christmas cards, advertisements and menu covers. His magazine commissions included covers for *Punch* and *Radio Times*. His work for John Harvey & Sons of Bristol and other wine merchants was sometimes paid in bottles, not cash. The most peculiar commission was the production of murals for a passenger liner; these panels were removed when the ship was decommissioned and still exist in the P&O Collection.

The author concentrates on the artist's work and comments on Ardizzone the man only when doing so informs our understanding of the art. The book reproduces initial drafts, colour work and master copies to demonstrate the processes involved. Final printed pages show the layouts of text and image that Ardizzone supervised. The quality of the reproductions is fittingly high. A chronology, endnotes, bibliography and index make this a comprehensive source for those interested in a prominent figure in British book illustration.

### **Futurist Painting Sculpture (Plastic Dynamism).** By Umberto Boccioni.

Edited by Maria Elena Versari, translated by Maria Elena Versari and Richard Shane Agin. 304 pp. incl. 51 col. + 13 b. & w. ills. (Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2016), \$49. ISBN 978-1-60606-475-7.

Reviewed by ROSALIND MCKEVER

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF Futurist rhetoric may no longer be a rarity, but this edition of Umberto Boccioni's 1914 book is a very welcome addition, providing a more nuanced account of Futurist art and theory from the pen of the movement's most prominent artist.<sup>1</sup> From its staccato title onwards, Boccioni's analyses of Futurism's predecessors, contemporaries and audiences, and impassioned defences of the movement, echo the manifestos. The language is bombastic and the content weighted towards repudiating Futurism's enemies. Yet in writing a seventeen-chapter book, about forty times longer than a manifesto, Boccioni could luxuriate in the time and space he had synthesised in his art and writing. Ideas such as 'force-lines', 'dynamic complementarity' and the interpenetration of planes, previously confined to a paragraph, are given whole,

if short, chapters. These build up to show how such ideas were interconnected.

With another of these ideas – the solidification of Impressionism – Boccioni reveals some of Futurism's internal dissonance. In the chapter titled 'Why We're Not Impressionists' Boccioni carefully defines what the Italian movement takes and discards from its French predecessors. Indeed, based on simultaneity of line and colour, Boccioni's book invokes numerous antecedents, even producing art-historical diagrams of Futurism's distant and recent predecessors.

It is the time after, not before, the fabled Futurist *tabula rasa* of 1909 that marks out this book. Unlike the manifestos written before a Futurist work of art was made, *Futurist Painting Sculpture* was written during the most fervent period of Boccioni's career, and thus provides an insight into the evolution of his theory and practice. As Maria Elena Versari's detailed introduction explains, Boccioni had completed a first, much shorter draft of the book by 1st December 1912, the end of the year in which the Futurists opened their notorious first group exhibition in Paris, and then took up sculpture. He continued to write throughout 1913, the year he launched his one-man sculpture show in Paris, including numerous articles for the new Futurist review *Lacerba* (some of which became part of the book), which led to spats with fellow Futurists and Parisian contemporaries alike.

Through comparison of the published text with the 1912 and 1913 manuscripts in the Getty Research Institute's Boccioni papers, Versari traces the artist's developing ideas. Most noticeably, his increasing use of the word 'plastic', particularly in conjunction with 'states of mind', coincides with his shift from symbolism to the analysis of form. Versari's introduction also substantially refines our understanding of Boccioni's philosophical, scientific and political matrix. Through recontextualising his ideas, she convincingly argues that the intertwining of avant-garde art and politics could be the book's *fil rouge*.

The book had a political function. This edition, like the original, includes Futurist manifestos, exhibition lists of works and illustrations (many in colour) by Boccioni and others, to make it a major reference work on Futurist art. The 1914 original was a successful ambassador. Not only did its illustrations inspire collectors such as Eric Estorick, but within a decade of its publication, it had been referenced by Kazimir Malevich, Richard Huelsenbeck and Vasily Kandinsky. This English edition should aid Futurist art's ever-improving reputation among historians of the international avant-gardes.

<sup>1</sup> The classic edition of *Futurist Manifestos*, edited by Umbro Apollonio (London 1973), has been superseded by L. Rainey, C. Poggi and L. Wittman, ed.: *Futurism: An Anthology*, New Haven and London 2009. The latter contains Boccioni's article 'The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting', which became a chapter in the book under review.

**My Dear BB . . . : The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Kenneth Clarke, 1925–1959.** Edited and annotated by Robert Cumming. 538 pp. incl. 50 b. & w. ills. (Yale University Press, London and New York, 2015), £25. ISBN 978-0-300-20737-8.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. SIMON

IN SEPTEMBER 1925 the twenty-two-year-old Kenneth Clark was brought to dine at I Tatti by Janet Ross, then the doyenne of Anglo-Florentine society and the first of dozens of luminaries from the cultural, political and social worlds that populate these letters. By the following day Bernard Berenson had invited Clark, then a third-year history undergraduate at Trinity College, Oxford, to become his assistant for a proposed new edition of his *Drawings of the Florentine Painters*. The immediate affinity of the two would be explored, deepened and questioned over the nearly thirty-five years treated in these letters, which read less as art-historical dialogue than the correspondence of passionate – if at times conflicted – lovers.

We can only speculate at what sparked their lifelong friendship. Certainly their approach to looking at paintings, rooted as it was in experience and sensuous response, must have been critical. In one of the earliest letters Clark confesses that he 'spent hours at the N.G. looking at Titians & Bellinis & feeling some of them for the first time'. That letter was written to Mary Berenson, whose correspondence with Clark, as well as that between Berenson's companion Nicky Mariano and Clark's wife, Jane, is wisely included in this volume.

Among the most telling parts of the correspondence are those that involve Clark's museum career and Berenson's concern that administrative, social and political obligations would divert Clark from the lofty ambitions and goals that they shared. Clark's professional success was rapid: from his appointment to the Selection Committee for the Italian Exhibition of 1930 (which Berenson opposed), to being appointed Keeper at the Ashmolean Museum the following year, and Director of the National Gallery in 1933. Berenson cautions against petty connoisseurship ('Let others decide which tenth rate drawing is by Pulcio di Ceaccio and which other is by Ciaccio di Pulcio') and the potential pitfalls of a career at Oxford: 'You certainly would be in clover to be in such a toy-shop for grown-ups', but 'the post will fix you down in the world of collectors, curators, dons' and you would become 'embogged in a pudding. It is perhaps the finest pudding in the world, but pudding all the same'.

Clark writes almost apologetically that his National Gallery 'appointment is only for five years, after which I can retire & lead a reasonable life, having worked the

poison out of my system', while Berenson is more encouraging about both the public and private benefits: 'The N.G. will be a school in which you can be headmaster and first pupil all at the same time'. However, twelve years later, when Clark resigned his post, Berenson writes, 'I congratulate you. You will now be able to devote yourself to tasks more worthy of your gifts and I look forward to the results'.

The playful wit that the two enjoyed is present from the first, as when Clark 'attributes' his new-born son Alan: 'it seemed to me abnormally ugly, but people with more experience assure me that it's beautiful. School of Baldovineti, anyway, and very close to the one in the André picture'. And while art and architecture are discussed with great reverence, many art historians are not: 'Bald-ass', 'Crowe & Cock', and 'St. Roger da Fry' all appear, although Berenson reserves a special place for the 'Germanophonies of Central Europe', chief among them Erwin Panofsky, to whose 'icononsenses' Berenson remained forever antagonistic. Clark is more amusing, as when he writes of the retiring Keeper in Oxford, Charles Bell, 'So his great life's work of preventing people seeing the drawings in the Ashmolean may be ruined'; or of Ellis Waterhouse, 'I think he is really our white hope and may replace [W.G.] Constable (passed to another sphere) as our one non dago Kunsthistorike'; or of Herbert Cook, 'there can be few people left in Europe who retain such an interest in the names of bad Italian painters'.

Berenson, like Cook, was one of the founders of this Magazine, about which he and Clark were intermittently critical. In 1934 Berenson asked 'Will most of its articles on Italian painting be written by brainless pedants or utter humbugs?', and in 1948 he decried 'the snobbish kind of stuffy rubbish about due & tre cento unprofessionals' that it published. Clark wrote that year 'that under our friend Ben [Nicolson] the poor old Burlington has reached a "new low", and ought to close down'. But his opinion clearly tempered, and it was in the September 1960 issue that Clark's commemorative address on Berenson was published, reprinted as an appendix to the volume under review.

Both Berenson and Clark are superb writers and there are memorable passages throughout: on art, on each other's writings, on people met, places visited and political events, although the Second World War leaves a crucial lacuna of over five years in the correspondence. Through it all there is an intimacy and honesty which seems to have reached its emotional height in an extraordinary letter of 1937 in which Berenson asks Clark for 'affection with perfect confidence, perfect ease. Without timidity or holding back of any sort. What I crave for is a brotherly comradeship'. That appears to have been imperfectly achieved, as is evident from some of the comments each made privately, but such are rare and secondary to the

genuine bond that held the two together and that Clark described after a visit to I Tatti just before the outbreak of the War: 'There was a flow of reason and learning combined with a genial warmth which made me feel I was living in a golden age of culture, a sunset of culture no doubt, but none the less beautiful for that. I loved every minute of it'.

In this volume their correspondence is reproduced in full, which inevitably means that there are repetitive topics of lesser interest to the contemporary reader – the medical travails of spouses, requests for photographs, digests of visitors and social occasions. But the cast of characters that pass through the lives of these two men is remarkable and it is one of the excellent qualities of this volume that they are identified and studied in the capsule biographies that the editor, Robert Cumming, has appended to the letters. This *dramatis personae*, together with the extensive annotations and chapter introductions, provide the necessary referents and contexts to the letters, which allow this volume to serve not only as a record of the friendship of these two giants but as a cultural chronicle of an era.

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**Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch, 1933–1953.** By Peter Simpson. 354 pp. incl. 395 col. + b. & w. ills. (University of Auckland Press, Auckland, 2016), \$NZ69.99. ISBN 978–86940–848–0.

Reviewed by MARK STOCKER

'THEY'RE A LOVELY PEOPLE, the New Zealanders, so hospitable and so charming. But for God's sake don't talk to them about art!' Far from indicting her compatriots' philistinism as is commonly supposed, when Frances Hodgkins wrote this in the mid-1930s, she instead revealed how out of touch she had become as a long-term expatriate. While Christchurch between 1933 and 1953 (the parameters of this volume) was not quite Paris in the 1900s or New York in the 1950s, the 'Garden City' punched far above its cultural weight compared to almost any other similarly sized centre in the Anglophone world.<sup>2</sup> Peter Simpson's excellently written and produced book presents a convincing case for this, without resorting to boosterism or indeed 'colonial strut', the antipode of 'colonial cringe' and its attendant deference to the Mother Country.

In 1955 the British author and publisher John Lehmann asked 'Why was it then that out of the hundreds of towns and universities in the English-speaking lands [. . .] only one should [. . .] act as a focus of creative literature of more than local significance; that it should be in Christchurch, New Zealand, that a group of young writers had appeared who were eager to assimilate the pioneer

developments in style and technique that were made in England and America since the beginning of the century [. . .] and to give their country a new conscience and spiritual perspective?' (p.1). Simpson's book provides a culturally multifarious and exhilarating answer.

As with Lehmann's field of literature, so with Christchurch painting, book design and illustration, music and theatre. The stellar figure in the last category was Ngaio Marsh, famed internationally for her crime novels but more celebrated by New Zealand literati for her Shakespearean productions involving talented student actors. Marsh herself had originally trained as a painter, and was an early member of 'The Group', a secessionist movement of progressive young Christchurch artists that, in 1927, aimed to counteract the 'promiscuous profusion' of the dominant Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) annual exhibition by installing their own works in less cramped conditions. Simpson rightly stresses that the relationship between the two organisations was 'fraternal rather than adversarial' (p.79). The Group's half-century lifespan probably owed more to its very moderation and eclecticism than to any dogmatic commitment to Modernism.

Central figures in The Group – and indeed in New Zealand art – between the 1930s and the 1950s include Rita Angus, Rata Lovell-Smith, Evelyn Page, Olivia Spencer Bower, Toss Woollaston, Doris Lusk, Bill Sutton and the young Colin McCahon: an impressive roll-call, all of whom worked for much of the period in Christchurch. Yet if there is a hero of 'Bloomsbury South', it is Leo Bensemann (1912–86), typographer, illustrator, designer, draughtsman, painter, Morris dancer, bohemian and conscientious objector. With the poet and publisher Denis Glover he founded the Caxton Press, whose productions were of sufficient skill, wit and formal elegance to earn the imprimatur of the doyen of British typography, Stanley Morison. As well as the poetry of Glover and Allen Curnow, the Caxton Press published New Zealand's most significant periodical of the arts and creative writing, *Landfall* (1947–), itself a memorial to its founder, editor and bank-roller, also poet, critic and patron, Charles Brasch.

Simpson's title, 'Bloomsbury South', is not far-fetched. While 'nothing could replicate Bloomsbury exactly', as Simpson argues, there were nonetheless striking parallels with the artistic networks that flourished in Christchurch a generation after Bloomsbury North: 'Both scenes were marked by the presence of a group of talented individuals of varying sexual orientation, all closely linked by friendship and similarities of aesthetic and intellectual outlook' (p.3). The creative epicentre was 97 Cambridge Terrace, Christchurch, where Angus, Bensemann and Lawrence Baigent – editor, accomplished pianist, pacifist and later academic – all lived in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Baigent and Bensemann were lovers before the