

to the dismally dark reproduction of no.6, the sparkling *Geneva, view of part of the town* (John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art).

⁵ Corot's works exhibited at the 1855 Exposition Universelle elicited qualified admiration from Calame: 'Corot est celui qui me va le plus au cœur pour la pensée, l'impression calme et douce, mais tous ses tableaux sont en deux couleurs, ciel gris, très lumineux, arbres et terrains sepia verdâtre, exécution des plus incomplètes . . .'; quoted in V. Anker: *Alexandre Calame: Vie et œuvre*, Fribourg 1987, p.254.

⁶ J. Brüschweiler: *Barthélemy Menn 1815–1893: Etude critique et biographique*, Zürich 1960.

⁷ Menn's startling perspicacity on the place of landscape in the century of Darwin is revealed in his 1841 observation that 'Je suis de plus en plus convaincu que le paysage est le genre de notre époque sans foi, sans unité par conséquent, où la grande peinture n'existe que par la science'; quoted in A. de Andrés: exh. cat. *Alpine Views: Alexandre Calame and the Swiss Landscape*, Williamstown (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute) 2006, p.45, note 73.

⁸ A. Leleux: 'Corot à Montreux', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue Suisse* 87 (1882), pp.470–95.

Bronzino

Florence

by ROBERT B. SIMON

2010 HAS BEEN called the 'Bronzino Year' by virtue of two major exhibitions devoted to the artist's work: *The Drawings of Bronzino*, earlier this year at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,¹ and now *Bronzino, Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici*, at the **Palazzo Strozzi, Florence** (to 23rd January). These exhibitions were not engendered by chronological obligation, but rather by the interest and devotion of their organisers (by contrast the 400th anniversary of Bronzino's death in 1972 was commemorated by a desultory slide-show at the Uffizi and his 500th birthday in 2003 with no public event at all). The curators of the current exhibition, Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, have benefited from the support and co-operation of museums and institutions in Florence and worldwide, both in arranging for the loan of many paintings on panel formerly unable to travel and in organising their conservation.

The result is an exhibition of the highest order. It begins in astonishing fashion with the four *tondi* from the Capponi Chapel in S. Felicita, Florence (cat. nos.I, 3, 4, 5 and 6), brought down from on high (and one from near-oblivion),² and presented at eye level. The long-confused and argued issues of authorship between Pontormo and Bronzino retreat upon experiencing these haunting Evangelists at close range. Their restoration is the first indication of what is one of the rewards of this exhibition: the opportunity to view not only Bronzino exotica but some of his most familiar works following exemplary conservation treatments, appropriately and sympathetically lit and displayed. No greater evidence of this can be found than in the



67. *Portrait of Bartolomeo Panciatichi*, by Agnolo Bronzino. c.1541–45. Panel, 104 by 85 cm. (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; exh. Palazzo Strozzi, Florence).

artist's most celebrated portraits, those of *Bartolomeo Panciatichi* (no.III, 1; Fig.67) and his wife, *Lucrezia* (no.III, 2). These normally live in the muted magnificence of the Uffizi *Tribuna*, where they will no doubt return. But for these four months they can be seen in sympathetic illumination following exemplary conservation: one doubts they will ever again be so accessible. As familiar as they are, discoveries abound: in formal and compositional details, in the variety and subtlety of the palette, in the complexities of costume and architecture. Could one ever see the stratification in the *pietre dure* beads that form Lucrezia's belt or the gold-on-blue embroidery visible through her purple slashed sleeves? Stolid Bartolomeo now seems to have acquired an expression imbued with wit and sympathy; intricate patterns (and a codpiece) articulate what had seemed a monolithic costume; and his sullen dog has become engaging, his paws and muzzle playfully resting on a narrow ledge long hidden by the picture frame.

These portraits hang luxuriously in a room with two other works associated with the Panciatichi, the *Holy Family with St John* from the Uffizi (no.III, 4) and a large *Christ Crucified* (no.II, 3; Fig.69) from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nice. The latter, which had masqueraded as a seicento work, is here exhibited for the first time since its proposal as the Panciatichi commission described by

Vasari.³ This entirely new addition to the Bronzino corpus is both unlike anything else by the artist and absolutely convincing as his. It is breathtaking in its austerity and solemnity, its function as an object of meditation undiminished. Christ seems a hyperreal simulacrum, more akin to a polychrome sculpture than a man, affixed to a heavily grained wooden cross wedged on all sides into a fictive chapel of *pietra serena* elements. The physical and visionary conflate as the faint trail of blood passes from his foot wounds to the wooden support before pooling on the stone ledge in the foreground. The restrained palette is relieved only by his lavender loincloth. For the duration of this exhibition, the Panciatichi room might be the coldest place on the planet.

The exhibition is intelligently organised: while broadly chronological, individual rooms focus on patronage, pictorial types and cultural associations. Whereas the first galleries treat the artist's relationship with Pontormo, his early work and his stay in Pesaro, the following room is devoted to Bronzino's career as artist at the Medici court for over thirty years. Here the intimate small-scale portraits of the Duke's children alternate with five of the grand tapestries (also recently restored) designed by Bronzino for the Palazzo Vecchio.⁴ Set against the blue wall covering edged with deep grey moulding and wainscoting with which the exhibition has

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been installed, the effect suggests the magnificent ambitions of Cosimo I de' Medici, while permitting quiet study of the individual works that once had more personal significance.

A second Medici gallery focuses on the Duke and Duchess – the portraits of *Cosimo I in Armour* from Sydney (no.II, 1) and that of *Eleonora di Toledo with her son Giovanni* from the Uffizi (no.I, 2). Between them and on either side of a photographic reproduction of the altar in Eleonora's chapel in the Palazzo Vecchio are exhibited the *St John the Baptist* from the J. Paul Getty Museum, long identified as the original left-side panel, and a recently discovered bearded saint at the right, reasonably proposed as a fragment of the lost *St Cosmas* (nos. II, 4 and 5).

The title of the exhibition gives equal weight to Bronzino's activity as a poet, although his literary career can only be indirectly suggested in such an exhibition. A room devoted to 'Bronzino and the Arts' does include autograph manuscripts of his poetry, written in the elegant chancery hand that appears in the portraits of *Laura Battiferri*, *Lorenzo Lenzi* and *Dante*, all exhibited nearby (nos.IV, 8, 1 and 3, respectively). But further discussion of his literary work requires an apposite venue, which the substantial exhibition catalogue provides.⁵ The works in this gallery relate to the artist's associations with literary figures, texts and theoretical concepts. These include sculpture, among which are Tribolo's bizarre *Nature goddess* from Fontainebleau, a kind of Diana of Ephesus carved in the round (no.IV, 9), the *Ganymede* that Cellini formed out of an ancient fragment (no.IV, 10) and works by Ammannati and Pierino da Vinci. Here Bronzino's two largest allegorical compositions are exhibited: the *Venus, Cupid, and a Satyr* (Galleria Colonna, Rome; no.IV, 6) and *Venus, Cupid and Jealousy* (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest; no.IV, 5). The Budapest *Allegory* was cleaned for this exhibition and the figures in the Colonna picture were relieved of their added drapery only a few years ago. Together they reflect



69. *Christ Crucified*, by Agnolo Bronzino. c.1540–41. Panel, 145 by 115 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nice; exh. Palazzo Strozzi, Florence).

aspects of contemporary discourse on love, but as splendid intellectualised illustrations rather than overtly erotic images.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is the first showing of Bronzino's two-sided *Portrait of the dwarf Morgante* (Fig.68) after years of conservation to consolidate its canvas support and remove eighteenth-century overpaint. It is a fascinating but difficult picture, a depiction of a figure both beloved and ridiculed at the court, here portrayed sympathetically, although not quite heroically. While the

painting served as a kind of *Kunstkammer* curiosity for the Duke, it demonstrably argued for the superiority of painting in the *paragone* debate then flourishing. Differences between recto and verso go beyond pose and setting to raise issues of time, aging and emotional state.

A room devoted to religious paintings is dominated by the *Resurrection* brought from SS. Annunziata (no.VI, 6). It is the sole altarpiece in the exhibition and amply demonstrates Bronzino's phenomenal capacities as a draughtsman and his love of extravagant poses. There is, however, a sense of the artist trying too hard. An instructive and challenging comparison is furnished by the side-by-side hanging of the two versions of the *Holy Family with Sts Anne and John* from Vienna and Paris (nos.VI, 3 and 4).

A gallery devoted to portraiture brings together many of the artist's astounding portraits from different periods, ranging from the early *Portrait of a lady with a lapdog* (Städel Museum, Frankfurt; no.V, 2) to the reunited portraits, thought to portray Pierantonio Bandini and his wife, from Ottawa and Turin (nos.V, 7 and 8). A final room is devoted to Bronzino's student Alessandro Allori and includes what may be his earliest independent work, a *Crucifixion* (Educatario di Fuligno, Florence; no.VII, 2) that echoes Bronzino's panel for the Panciatichi.

This exhibition and the comparisons and juxtapositions of paintings it affords will no doubt give rise to reconsiderations of dating

68. *Double-sided portrait of the dwarf Morgante*, by Agnolo Bronzino. Before 1553. Canvas, each 150 by 98 cm. (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; exh. Palazzo Strozzi, Florence).



and attribution. Thankfully, only a few works seem problematic, questions of authorship being at times hampered by problems of condition.⁶ The catalogue, like the wall labels, presented in both Italian and English, is an impressive and valuable volume with essays and entries by an international array of scholars. As one would expect, these vary in interest, scope and quality, although the level is generally high; some entries, however, seem inappropriately self-referential. The colour plates are superb and gratefully reflect the paintings' state after conservation treatments that must have concluded shortly before the opening of the exhibition. One is eager to see the many infra-red reflectograms cited in entries of recently conserved paintings and can only hope for a future publication.

The curators of this exhibition have presented Bronzino in a focused manner, shaped by the artist's work and career, and have refrained from making him an actor in the amorphous play facetiously called 'Mannerism'. The exhibition design is elegant, masculine, a little severe – much like the painter – and serves to underscore the extraordinary power that his paintings communicate.

¹ Reviewed by David Franklin in this Magazine, 152 (2010), pp.350–51.

² See J. Wasserman: 'The "St Matthew" tondo for the Capponi chapel in S. Felicita, Florence', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 152 (2010), pp.12–17.

³ P. Costamagna and C. Falciani: 'Le "Christ en Croix" d'Agnolo Bronzino peint pour Bartolomeo Panciatichi', *Revue de l'art* 168 (2010), pp.45–52.

⁴ Others from the series are currently on view at the Palazzo Vecchio, while the remaining ten in the Palazzo del Quirinale were recently restored and exhibited there; see L. Godart, ed.: exh. cat. *Giuseppe negli arazzi di Pontorno e Bronzino; Viaggio tra I tesori del Quirinale*, Rome (Palazzo del Quirinale) 2010.

⁵ Catalogue: *Bronzino, Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici*. Edited by Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, with essays by Alessandro Cherubini, Marco Collareta, Elizabeth Cropper, Carlo Falciani, Massimo Firpo, Francesca de Luca, Antonio Natali, Massimiliano Rossi and contributions from others. 360 pp. incl. 152 col. + 64 b. & w. ills. (Mandragora, Florence, 2010), €40. ISBN 978-88-7461-154-6 (English edition). *Bronzino Pittore e Poeta alla Corte dei Medici*. ISBN 978-88-7461-153-9 (Italian edition).

⁶ The attribution of the *St Michael* from Turin (no.1, 7) seems speculative in the light of its compromised condition. Neither should the *Dante* (private collection; no.IV, 3), proposed as the lost lunette for Bartolomeo Bettini, be accepted without qualification; its condition hardly permits such a judgment. The *Uffizi Madonna with Sts Jerome and Francis* (no.1, 8), refreshingly labelled 'Formerly attributed to Pontorno then to Bronzino then to Mirabello Cavalori', does seem, in the context of the exhibition, to be by the last named, while the two *Madonna and Child with St John* compositions (no.1, 9; Galleria Corsini, Florence, and no.1, 11; private collection, Milan) seem by another hand entirely. One should also acknowledge that the *Apollo and Marsyas* (no.1, 16; State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg), while no doubt the harpsichord lid that Vasari tells us Bronzino painted at Pesaro, has been much transformed. The branch that covers Marsyas's genitalia must be an old addition; other passages (such as Athena's profile) seem modified, and we know that the panel was made up to a rectangle before its transfer to canvas in the nineteenth century.

Max Oppenheimer

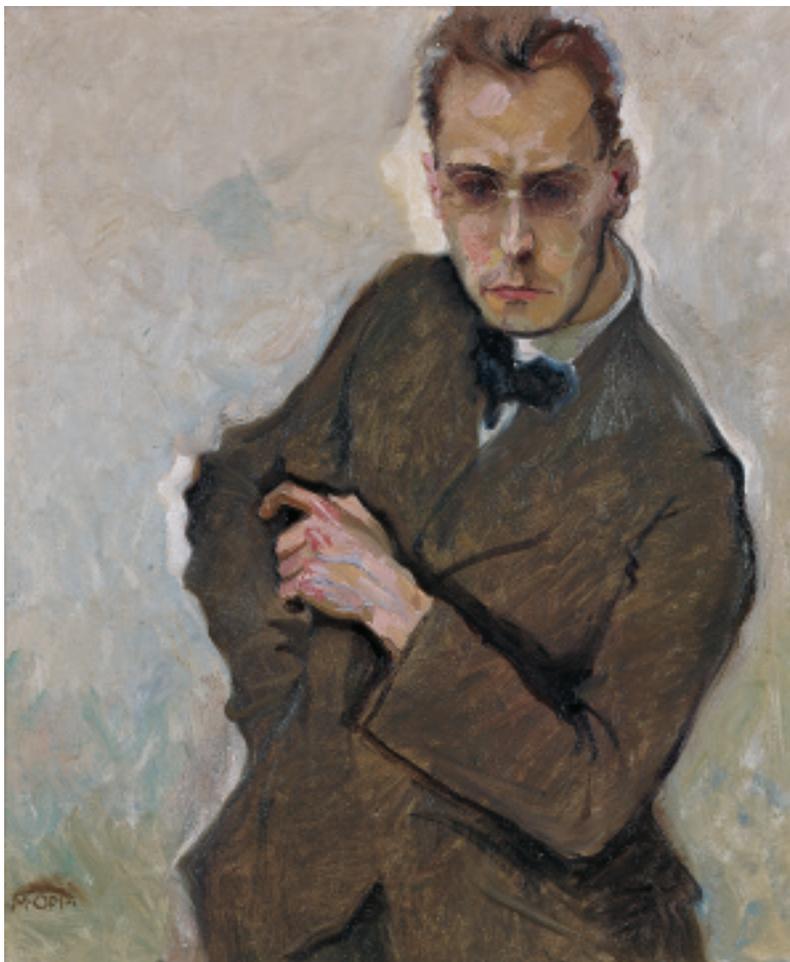
Vienna

by ELIZABETH CLEGG

A FESTIVE END to the international celebration of 2010 as the 150th anniversary of the birth of the composer and conductor Gustav Mahler has been staged by the **Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna**, with *Max Oppenheimer – Mahler und die Musik* (to 13th February), the fourth display in its 'Meisterwerke im Fokus' series.¹ The work in question is *The Philharmonic* (Fig.71), acquired on long-term loan in 1979: an idealised evocation of Mahler conducting the Viennese orchestra he led in concert performances from 1898 to 1901 at the start of his decade as Director of the Court Opera. Oppenheimer worked intermittently throughout the second half of his career on assembling this tableau of sixty life-sized players (which in essence reprises his only slightly smaller picture of 1921–23, *The orchestra*). Presenting it alongside sixteen earlier works (with loans from Austrian, German, Swiss and Italian public and private collections), the Belvedere traces Oppenheimer's evolving response, as draughtsman, print-maker and painter, to his own diverse encounters with the 'making' of music: the intellectual enigma of composition (Fig.70), the visual drama of performance (Fig.72) and the spiritual rapture of hard-won accord (Fig.71).

This especially appealing strand in Oppenheimer's *œuvre* emerges intermittently and variously within all the genres he favoured: portraits, still lifes, religious subjects with a strong emotive (often homoerotic) charge, and their contemporary profane equivalents. It also reveals his enduring debt as much to the Cubist and Futurist devices he adopted around 1912/13 as to the Expressionism ascribed to him in a monograph published in 1911.² But this summary encompassing of an entire working life also firmly places Oppenheimer, or MOPP (as he liked to be known), in the problematic category of the 'Austrian artist abroad': the imperial, and later republican, capital city of Vienna, where he was born in 1885, featured relatively briefly (1909–11, 1924–25, 1932–38) in a career that was to take in Prague (1903–08), Berlin (1912–14), Zürich (1915–17), Geneva (1918–23), Berlin again (1926–31), and finally New York (1939–54).

The son of a German-Jewish publisher, journalist and music critic originally from Pressburg/Pozsony (now Bratislava), and with a keen interest in music from his childhood, Oppenheimer was sent, after his father's death in 1903, to his mother's native Prague, where he spent three years at the Academy of Fine Arts. While disdainful of the training he received there, he could hardly have been left unmoved by events convulsing the city's broader art life, not least the Edvard Munch retrospective of 1905. Oppenheimer, moreover, counted among his chief Prague



70. *Portrait of Anton von Webern*, by Max Oppenheimer. 1909. Canvas, 78 by 68 cm. (Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal; exh. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna).