



Treatises of Art in XIV~XVI century Italy: Contributions to the Intellectual Emancipation of Art and Artists

A Dissertation Defense by Carlotta Paltrinieri

Between the 15th and 16th centuries, the visual arts experience a transition of status from mechanical to liberal. This transition has been thoroughly investigated, especially in its social and cultural aspects: artists achieve a higher position in society, whilst philosophical and literary debates on the intellectual dignity of the arts flourish. The primary focus of the artistic literature of the time becomes the construction of a theory of art, based on previous intellectual discourses around the definition and study of the liberal arts. Artists and literati join forces to emancipate the visual arts, though each uses a different strategy to do so. The Book of Art by Cennino Cennini can be considered the first attempt to acknowledge the creative license of art (specifically painting) and thus the starting point of this evolution; an evolution that is later promoted through the art treatises of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento, in which artists and literati freely exchange ideas about the intellectual potential of art and the status of the artist.

The artists and literati included in this dissertation, such as Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci and Giorgio Vasari, voice a common aspiration: giving a theoretical basis to art, inasmuch as it is considered to be disciplined by the intellect and thus worthy of being included among the liberal arts. This research addresses some of the main issues of the Renaissance, such as the balance between *ars* and *ingenium*; the authority of classical models in the treatment of new topics and in the search for new art forms; and the quarrel originating from the Horatian *ut pictura poësis*. Such issues, drawn from both the classical and humanist traditions, are re-elaborated to promote the intellectual emancipation of the visual arts.

10am, Tuesday
July 17th

Sassafras Room
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