

SAKAMOTO, Atsushi

Jacopo Vignali and S. Maria Novella

Sakamoto Atsushi's article focuses on Jacopo Vignali, a 17th century Florentine painter who has until now lacked a basic monograph. Through his identification of Vignali as the painter for several works for S. Maria Novella monastery, the focal point of the Dominican order in the region, he was able to clarify the painter's relationship with the monastery.

The most superb aspect of this article is the author's eager reconstruction of the activities of this previously little studied painter through a scrupulous stylistic analysis of extant paintings and a careful reading, interpretation and matching up of documents from the period, such as chronicles and commission records. The steady and persistent work and his verifying of acts through the unpublished Latin histories that remain in libraries and archives in Florence were conducted with the highest international standards.

The article focuses on three projects that Vignali did for the Santa Maria Novella Monastery. Sakamoto focused first on Domenico Gori – a Dominican friar who was the spiritual leader of the Confraternity of S. Benedetto Bianco that centered on that monastery -- as the reason that Vignali's connection with this particular monastery. From 1614 onwards Vignali had a close connection with the Order and came to enjoy the favor of Gori. During his tenure as head of the monastery, Gori introduced two new experiments, the memorial services for the dead and the celebration of Saint Dominic held jointly with the Franciscan order. Vignali was entrusted with the creation of paintings related to the two events, and Sakamoto spells out Vignali's early period history through his relationship with S. Maria Novella.

Next Sakamoto identifies the works that Vignali produced for the dei Beati room in the monastery's bell tower in the 1620s, and interprets its decoration

program. He also considered the imagery that does not remain extant except in the monastery's chronicles, and accurately argues that the monastery's intention was to provide a visualization of the legitimacy of the monastery through its connection with the Order's founder Saint Dominic.

Finally Sakamoto reconstructs the decorative scheme of the monastery's library. Vignali was involved with this project during his late years and Sakamoto identifies Vignali as the painter of three works in the scheme. While the evidence appears accurate, another hypothesis does not allow scope for such possibilities as the suggestion that some of the works were cut out by later generations, and thus we can hope for further evidence regarding this matter through later on-site investigations. And yet, while some temporary conclusions remain based on current evidence, they do not in anyway lessen the value of this eager research on previously unstudied works that experimented with the first inclusive reconstruction based on historical materials from the period.

This study, rich in new knowledge, not only supplements the known catalogue raisonné of Vignali, it can also be highly regarded as making a valuable contribution to the future study of 17th century Florentine art overall. We look forward to Sakamoto's development of even deeper research that goes beyond these fundamental studies and will contribute even more in the future.

For these reasons we have awarded the Bijutsushi Prize to Sakamoto Atsushi.