

many, impeccably researched articles on Rosso *e dintorni* published in this Magazine as well as in other major art-historical journals, but the book is much more than the sum of its parts.

The Preface offers a useful overview of the main goals and methodological premises of the text. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the artist's early career in Florence. Franklin gives a very balanced assessment of the outdoor tabernacle produced for Piero Bartoli, the uncle of Cosimo, near his Marignolle villa and of the recent identification of this work by Natali (1991) with the very damaged tabernacle on the via della Campora, outside the Porta Romana. Moreover, Franklin challenges the idea that Fra Bartolomeo and Sarto might have played a major rôle in Rosso's education and emphasises instead 'the stylistic fissure between [his] initial works as a painter and those masters most active in the Florence of his youth'. Indeed, Rosso's first two major surviving public commissions, the *Assumption of the Virgin* in the atrium of the SS. Annunziata and the altar-piece for the Catalan widow Francesca Ripoi, a painting commissioned by the powerful and rather spirited director of the Hospital of S. Maria Nuova, Leonardo Buonafé, were heavily criticised and the latter even rejected by the patron. Franklin's investigation of the story surrounding the Ripoi altar-piece is masterly and typical of his method: the discussion of its original setting, the reasons for its format, change in design and rejection, which was the result of Buonafé's conservative taste so brilliantly reconstructed by the author, are clearly analysed. It was a rare case of a patron refusing a work, although this had a precedent in Michelangelo's *Bacchus* which, as Michael Hirst has pointed out, was originally commissioned by Cardinal Riario and only later purchased by Jacopo Galli, and in some other works produced by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Tuscan artists, as Franklin notes (p. 48).

The early sixteenth century was the period in which artists became increasingly 'independent' and tensions with patrons became more common: it is indeed remarkable that most of Rosso's early works were rejected, left unfinished (not only the disconcerting panel in Los Angeles but also the celebrated Volterra *Deposition* and many others) or not even begun (Rosso was allotted another fresco in the atrium of the Annunziata on 18th April 1517, but he never started the work). One wonders how Rosso could manage to pay his bills, but it is possible that the artist could rely upon the help of a mentor-admirer – probably Fra Jacopo di Battista de Rubeis, from whom, as well as from his own red hair, he might have derived his nickname, Rubeus, more or less like Francesco de' Rossi, who became known as Salviati because of his close associations with the renowned Salviati family.

It is even conceivable that Rosso was consciously trying to create a public persona based on Michelangelo's example. Of course, the author is well aware of the rôle played by the older artist in Rosso's desire to create an image of a powerful talent with no teachers (p.3), an image later so expertly developed by Vasari, who met the painter

Rosso in Italy. The Italian Career of Rosso Fiorentino. By David Franklin. 336 pp. incl. 211 b. & w. and col. pls. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994), \$55. ISBN 0-300-05893-4.

This is one of the best, most detailed monographs ever written on a sixteenth-century Italian artist and an astonishing achievement for such a young scholar. David Franklin is already well known for his

in Arezzo when he was in his teens. Furthermore, Franklin is very astute in identifying Rosso's many quotations from Michelangelo's works. However, he should have stressed more clearly Rosso's important contribution to the creation of the image of the 'modern' artist. On the one hand there is the imitation of Michelangelo's *terribilità* (the difficult relationship with his patrons, the works left unfinished, the drawings made for other, less talented colleagues, his pride and independence), but on the other there is the clever use of prints made to advertise his inventions and creativity. Surprisingly, Franklin writes in his Preface that in Rome 'Rosso had . . . to design engravings merely to survive' (p. vii), as if this were a makeshift solution. However, it can be argued that this is only one part of the story, and that Franklin is more accurate when he comments on the 'potential lucrativeness and aesthetic gratification of producing prints' (p. 155). Indeed, it is likely that Rosso had Raphael in mind when he began his collaboration with Jacopo Caraglio, and his engravings, so well catalogued by Eugene A. Carroll for the exhibition organised by the National Gallery in Washington in 1987–88, were among his most influential and powerful designs. This very important aspect of Rosso's personality gets somewhat lost in the dense narrative created by the author.

The other chapters of the book logically follow the artist in his peripatetic life: Piombino and Volterra (chapter 3), his return to Florence (chapter 4), his move to Rome where he stayed until the Sack (chapter 5), his visits to Perugia and Sansepolcro (chapter 6), Città di Castello (chapter 7), Arezzo (chapter 9), Venice and beyond (chapter 10); the portraits are wisely treated in a separate chapter.

A short review cannot do justice to the enormous wealth of new information contained in this volume. Franklin's archival skills are well known and one great strength of the book is in the abundant documentation painstakingly discovered and collected over a long period of research in the Italian archives. But this aspect should not overshadow his other equally important achievements: for example, his text is replete with many original observations on liturgical and iconographic matters as well as on tricky issues of connoisseurship and colour symbolism. The author looks long and hard for evidence, not only in the archives but also in the 'texts' themselves, be they paintings or prints, drawings by Rosso or copies after his lost inventions, never forgetting Flaubert's adage that the truth is hidden in the details. Franklin's formal analyses are often perceptive, as when he explains how Rosso's panel in Sansepolcro is divided into two parts: the group in the foreground is separated from the mourners and the soldiers in the background 'not only spatially, but emotionally and meteorologically as well. The whole middle ground is affected by a wind rushing from the right to the left against the direction of the picture's raking light, which does not enter the foreground' (p. 172).¹ Finally, the author demonstrates not only a deep understanding of the artist, but also a masterly com-

mand of the issues concerning fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Tuscan art. Rosso is never dealt with in isolation: the chapters on Florence show Franklin's profound knowledge of the works by Michelangelo, Sarto and Pontormo, among others; but the most impressive part of the book is his truly outstanding reconstruction of Rosso's sojourn in Central Italy between 1527 and 1530, when he left for France. If space does not permit more specific discussion of Franklin's many findings, a few words should be spent on his empirical method. This book is clearly a Courtauld product, and indeed its basis was a doctoral dissertation examined there in 1991. Franklin's models are the writings of Johannes Wilde and Michael Hirst. From them he has inherited not only a keen interest for reconstructing the original setting for which the works were created – including the frame, the source of illumination, and the effect of the environment on the colours – but also a superb knowledge of the quality and function of drawings. The title of chapter five, *In Urbe*, which was also used by Hirst in his monograph on Sebastiano del Piombo, is a sincere homage from the author to his mentor.

To conclude, this is a very important book well served by the excellent standards of production of the Yale University Press.

ALESSANDRO NOVA

J. W. Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt

¹In his discussion of this panel, Franklin argues that the pen and ink study for the dead Christ in the Albertina in Vienna (fig. 133) is 'the only surviving study for the painting' (p. 170). This implies that the red chalk study for the head of St John the Evangelist in Christ Church, published by Byam-Shaw as 'ascribed to Salviati', is a copy and not an original. Indeed, the drawing, which has not yet been associated with Rosso in the literature, is rather crude, but it should be noted that Hirst attributed it to Salviati and Pouncey to Vasari. It is likely that Franklin knows the sheet because in Byam-Shaw's catalogue the drawings by Salviati are reproduced immediately after those by Rosso, and it would have been interesting to know his opinion on this matter.