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Review Of "Bernardo Vittone E La Disputa Fra Classicismo E Barocco Nel Settecento (Atti Del Convegno Internazionale Promosso Dall'Accademia Delle Scienze Di Torino, 21-24 September 1970)" By V. Viale And B. Vittone; "Bildungsgut Und Antikenrezeption Des Fruhen Settecento In Rom: Studien Zum Romischen Aufenthalt Bernardo Antonio Vittones" By W. Oechslin; "Baroque Architecture" By C. Norberg-Schulz; And "Late Baroque And Rococo Architecture" By C. Norberg-Schulz

T. Kaori Kitao

Swarthmore College, tkitao1@swarthmore.edu

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Review

Author(s): T. Kaori Kitao

Review by: T. Kaori Kitao

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Catholic Reformation viewpoint has an altogether coherent position: it sidesteps the challenge of the *Last Judgment* and exalts the *Moses*. The *Last Judgment* represents a paradigm of Christianity, even used to counter the works of the ancients in accordance with the elevation of Catholic civilization above all others.

De Maio, though cautious, breaks new ground which the art historian neglects at his own peril. His profound knowledge of Church history and recognition of the centrality of liturgy to Michelangelo's late work provide a guide far more reliable than the frequently pseudo-literary pretensions of art historical criticism.

CESARE DE SETA

University of Naples

(Translated by Diane Ghirardo,
Stanford University)

Vittorio Viale, ed., *Bernardo Vittone e la disputa fra classicismo e barocco nel settecento* (Atti del Convegno Internazionale promosso dall'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, 21-24 September 1970), 2 vols., Turin: Accademia delle Scienze, 1972, vol. I: 600 pp., about 281 figs.; vol. II: 384 pp., approx. 245 figs. Lit. 26,000.

Werner Oechslin, *Bildungsgut und Antikenrezeption des fruhen Settecento in Rom; Studien zum romischen Aufenthalt Bernardo Antonio Vittones*, Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1972, 210 pp., 84 illus. DM42.00.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Baroque Architecture*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., n.d. 407 pp., 395 illus. \$37.50.

Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1974, 415 pp., 514 illus. \$37.50.

The Vittone Congress of 1970, held at the Accademia delle Scienze in Turin only two years after the Guarini Congress, was occasioned by the second centenary of the architect's death. But the architectural community apparently was not quite ready for it, to judge by the two volumes on the acts, a lesser and somewhat shoddy sequel to the volumes of Guarini. Twenty-one scholars—mostly Italian and almost two-thirds of those who attended the Guarini Congress—presented 24 papers, all of which are collected here together with the inaugural address by the late Professor Wittkower. But what they add to our knowledge of Vittone's architecture is regrettably slim; too few papers, mostly uninspired, discuss the central issues of the architect's major contributions, while

many concern matters either peripheral to or entirely outside of them.

The title of the book, though not a misnomer, is misleading. It makes one imagine that the papers focus on Vittone's inner contradictions or attempt to discuss his theory and practice on the basis of the classic-baroque dichotomy. The three sections of the book are entitled: "La disputa fra classicismo e barocco nel '700," "Bernardo Vittone," and "Documenti ed attribuzioni." The first section ignores the existence of Vittone; and, conversely, the contributions in the two remaining sections are entirely oblivious of the theme stated in the first. Aside from this fundamental flaw in defining itself, the book is the usual medley of brilliant essays, solid studies, and scholarly trivia.

R. Assunto's lengthy essay that opens the first section belabors through Voltaire, Bottari, Gracian, Boileau, Pope, Leibniz, and Vico, among others, only to demonstrate the rather obvious "non-dialettizzabilità di classicismo e barocco"; but while it meanders, it is informative, and it is the only study that develops the theme of the section. E. Battisti's discussion of his notion of "neo-Baroque" in 18th-century theories is original and provocative. His is the only paper in the section that tries conscientiously to place Vittone in the context of his thesis; but the effort remains unconvincing, given the fact that Turin, after all, was not Venice and from Guarini to Vittone the Baroque heritage is visibly uninterrupted. For the rest we read of the debate on Gothic projects (N. Carbonerio), now superseded for the most part by Wittkower's fuller treatment of the subject (*Gothic Vs. Classic*, New York, 1974); of Juvarrà's classicism (A. Griseri), "l'architettura dell'Illuminismo" (A. Rossi), Alessandro Pompei (V. Vercelloni), Neoclassic architecture in Poland (S. Wilinski), and Piranesi (M. Tafuri). Subtitled "L'architettura come 'utopia negativa,'" Tafuri's paper, conspicuously out of place in the volumes on Vittone, is, nevertheless, not only the best in the book but also an essay of rare intelligence and imagination; he interprets the *Campomarzio* as a project that denounces itself—"a semantic void by reason of the excess of visual noise."

The second section on Vittone is dominated by A. Cavallari Murat's exhaustive exegesis of the architect's treatises, particularly in relation to Vitruvius; and M. Fagiolo's fascinating discussion of Vittone's theory of light as expressed in his *Istruzioni elementari*. These two papers and W. Mueller's on stereotomy magnify rather than close the division between Vittone's theory and practice. S. Benedetti

reviews the buildings and drawings in Rome that the Piemontese would have seen on his arrival there in 1731; in a more rigorous historical study, W. Oechslin demonstrates the sources of Vittone's academic designs in Fischer von Erlach's *Historische Architektur*, a credible thesis that scarcely alters our understanding of his small, intricate churches—his major output as Wittkower reminds us in his address. Four brief essays address Vittone's churches: C. Norberg-Schulz's syntactic exercise on centrality and extension, P. Portoghesi's summary discussion of the central and longitudinal traditions in Italian church design, H. Millon's clarification of Vittone's chronology through 1742, and W. Oechslin's second essay, "Vittone e l'architettura europea," which isolates and traces back—mostly in Italy—some of the basic architectural motifs of his churches. The third section of archival studies is not only inconsequential, but also uninspiring; the papers mostly deal with Vittone's secular architecture and minor constructions.

Interest in Vittone's churches centers around the structural and spatial complexities of their vaults. But formal and syntactical analyses take us only so far; new questions must be asked, but perhaps they are not yet formulated. This may explain why the distinguished roster of contributing scholars (from which Richard Pommer's name is regrettably absent) outshines what the two volumes finally deliver to us. It is, nevertheless, a mystery why no one discusses colors in Vittone's churches; there are aspects of his patronage and finances that might be explored; and we still know so little of his contact with the architectural traditions in the north, suggested by Wittkower.

The last point is, of course, one that Oechslin nominally makes in his first article when he links Vittone with Fischer von Erlach—the theme, also, of his own book, a collection of loosely related studies (of which the article in question was one) submitted as a doctoral dissertation to the University of Zurich in 1970. I say nominally because, first, the author's protagonist is actually Fischer von Erlach of the *Entwurf einer Historischen Architektur* (Vienna, 1721), a copy of which Vittone apparently owned, and, second, the book's focus is really not Vittone *architetto*, but rather the growing interest in antiquity in Settecento Rome as a source of architectural ideas, in which young Vittone fully participated (so the thesis goes) during his sojourn there from October 1731 to April 1733. This, in fact, constitutes the principal study to which are appended as Part 2 four shorter studies, all of which

eventually appeared elsewhere in Italian (as noted in the author's preface), viz., "18th-Century Internationalism," "Antonio Deriset (Derizer)," "Vittone in Rome," and his academic project, the "Tempio di Mose," submitted to the Accademia di San Luca.

Oechslin's scholarship in his book is of the highest order. He describes meticulously and argues lucidly; and he is rigorous and thorough in his documentation. Yet his writings fail in the end to stir the reader; and I diagnose a certain myopia in his critical perspective. Focusing on the subject of Vittone, with which he presumably started his work on his dissertation, he failed to see or develop the full implication of the role which Fischer's *Historische Architektur* played in the rising historicist consciousness of the century. This, I believe, was international in magnitude (and the author was surely aware of it); next to it Fischer's direct influence on Vittone was an interlude of marginal significance without which one speculates the latter would have developed as he did anyway. Also of great interest to me are Oechslin's findings on the Accademia di San Luca—not only the documents in the appendix but also the material scattered throughout the book; they add greatly to our knowledge of the education of architects in Settecento Rome.

Norberg-Schulz's two volumes belong to the History of World Architecture Series edited by Pier Luigi Nervi, originally an Italian publication (Electa Editrice), of which a number have recently been reviewed in this *Journal*. They are large and impressive, but one soon discovers upon scrutiny that they fall far short of expecta-

tions as introductory surveys and no less as picture books.

In each volume the text adds up to no more than 50-odd pages; 50 more pages are given to ancillary notes, chronological tables, capsule biographies, and an index. The rest of the book is taken up by illustrations that happily include a generous number of plans, diagrams, and isometric views. Many of the photographs are full-page or two-page spreads; but for the most part they are grey and grainy as though overenlarged from small negatives. They should have been selected and laid out, too, with more sensitivity and imagination, avoiding repetition while striving to be informative.

The text is analytical rather than historical in approach and typological in organization; this is expected of the author who is a practicing architect, and I have no objection as such. But the discussion of monuments is generally pedestrian, at times puerile, and interminably repetitive throughout the books, reminiscent of uninspired slide lectures. For it is largely descriptive along the extremely limited definition of architectural styles in terms of spatial systems (e.g., centralization, continuity, and extension in *Baroque Architecture*). Moreover, the first chapter introducing the historical period and the last on the diffusion of the style reiterate extensively the material in the main typological chapters entitled—"The City," "The Church" and "The Palace" (only the last two in *Late Baroque and Rococo Architecture*). Characterizing Baroque by focusing on three urban centers—Rome, Paris, and Turin—is certainly valid, but compressing all the rest in seven pages and 32

illustrations distorts the book's title. St. Stephen Walbrook, for example, receives six lines, a plan, a small photograph of the two entrance bays, and no dome.

Of the two volumes, the latter is substantially superior. Central Europe is the author's area of expertise and, drawing from his own earlier studies, he introduces apt and useful terms like "syncopated interpenetration" and "pulsating juxtaposition." But the general quality still hardly justifies the book's price, which is prohibitive for most students and, therefore, defeats the introductory function the text was apparently written to fulfill.

It is my woeful lot to discuss this prolific author, so far virtually ignored by this *Journal*, with these two ill-conceived volumes. His monograph on Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer (Rome, 1968) is a respectable introduction; his earlier *Intentions in Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965) is a much-needed attempt to formulate an architectural theory that shows intelligence as well as erudition. One wishfully speculates that a usable text might emerge if the two volumes were combined into one, edited drastically to remove repetitions, and bound in paperback with minimal photographs and other illustrations. In fact, such a book does exist in the form of Norberg-Schulz's *Meaning in Western Architecture* (New York: Praeger, 1975), also an Electa publication in origin, which for \$9.95 delivers relevant material on not only Baroque to Rococo, but Egypt to the 20th century.

As for the source of photographs, the top of my list is still Pevsner, Jubilee Edition.

T. KAORI KITAO
Swarthmore College

AMERICAN ALBUM

Paul F. Norton, *Latrobe, Jefferson and the National Capitol*, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977, 430 pp., 68 illus. \$40.00.

Garland has begun publishing a series of outstanding dissertations in the fine arts. *Latrobe, Jefferson and the National*

Capitol, completed in 1952, meets the requirements of scholarly publication even though it lacks an index. Since it contains so much unpublished material, it is amazing that this work was not printed before now. It is an excellent study of the first great European architect in a long line of famous men who have enriched Amer-

ican architecture. With the great President Jefferson supporting him both politically and aesthetically, Latrobe created a building symbolic of the importance and nobility of the American democratic experience so ardently desired by Jefferson.

In 1801, when Jefferson first appointed Latrobe architect of the new Capitol, the