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NOTES AND REVIEWS

A PICTORIAL PRINCIPLE OF MANNERISM

BY ANNE ARMSTRONG WALLIS

That Mannerism is a separate style, and not merely the ending of the Renaissance or the beginning of the Baroque, is generally admitted. In what the style consists, however, and on what principles it rests merit further consideration.

Wölfflin's well known paired categories are inadequate for the characterization of Mannerism. In his terms we might say that Mannerism is linear rather than painterly, multiple rather than unified, planimetric rather than receding, closed in form rather than open, clear rather than unclear. Yet he describes Raphael in this way too. His terminology was designed to contrast the classic (*Germanice*) Renaissance with the Baroque, and not to distinguish other styles from either. In fact, the compressed plane of Mannerism is totally unlike the Renaissance plane to which Wölfflin refers; the closed form is not the closed, tectonic form of Renaissance design; and the clearness of Mannerism is merely a sharpness or distinctness, independent of formal clarity.

Unfortunately Mannerist painting is usually characterized negatively in terms of Renaissance painting. Such phrases as lack of space, lack of formal clarity, lack of force in drawing, and lack of naturalness make up the common descriptive repertory. Even less tell-tale words, crowdedness, ambiguity, unnaturalness, betray the same process of thought. The positive side of Mannerism is overlooked.

The Mannerist painter felt that all forms should depend on a vertical plane just within the picture. He worked with reference to that plane, as the sculptor sometimes works with reference to the marble block trying to keep the carved surfaces "en rapport" with the vanished surfaces of the block. This quality of Mannerism constitutes a principle governing the placing of plastic forms. No part should appear to project or recede sufficiently to disturb the integrity of the plane.

At the height of the Renaissance a greater consciousness of the surfaces of forms became evident among the painters. This consciousness developed to a fine point in Michelangelo, whose work most clearly reveals the aesthetic potentialities of such surfaces. The new resource preoccupied the Mannerists. Its possibilities were exploited by them, as again in recent times by the Abstractionists.

The Mannerists' use of forms was highly specialized and highly abstract. Pontormo constructed a shallow space with forms the surfaces of which were put in strict relation to the picture plane. In some of his numerous experiments Picasso has done much the same thing. His *Landscape of the Simon Collection* (Fig. 1) shows exactly the treatment employed by the Mannerists and can be used to demonstrate their methods. The composition is built up of many separate forms, all having the same relation to the picture plane but an ambiguous relationship to one another. If the curving wall in the foreground were continued downward across the structure at the lower right, it would assert itself as the nearest object in the landscape. But that is avoided; and, just as studiously, the distant forms are prevented from receding. Picasso's most obvious device for unification of the planes is the continuation of one line through several forms. The inner edge of the foreground building at the right is continued by the outline of the distant house. In Mannerism, likewise, the large foreground objects are deprived of their repoussé effect; see, for instance, Parmigianino's drawing for the Bath of Cupid and the Nymphs (Uffizi).

Another device of Picasso's is to converge several forms at a point in such a way that none takes precedence and all seem placed in the same plane. This, again, is a device of the Mannerists. Used in a design of the academic school, it would cause great structural weakness, but in Mannerism there can be no question of structural weakness or strength in this sense. Stability as an aesthetic quality is not sought.

The Mannerists liked to place forms adjacent to one another instead of overlapping, and thus to build up the composition with plastic volumes while keeping all surfaces functioning equally. Pontormo's studies for the lost frescoes in S. Lorenzo provide some of the finest examples. In the *Christ in Glory* (Fig. 5) the forms touch, supporting each other linearly but not as solid objects. Nearly every form appears wholly in view, its outline uninterrupted, and repeatedly the adjacent forms share a single outline.

Not only in groups but within the single figure, the Mannerists kept forms rigidly in one plane. A comparison of sketches by Pontormo and Leonardo (Figs. 7 and 8) shows the contrast between adjacent forms and overlapping ones. With Pontormo notice that the head and limbs tend to become independent of the body. Leonardo, on the contrary, utilized every anatomical unit to set back the next. One form overlapping the most convex part of another is particularly effective for this purpose. On the other hand, Pontormo shows how the effect of overlapping can be diminished, practically negated, by making the points of intersection coincide with concavities in the outlines, as at the separation of the legs and at the points where the left arm emerges from the back in another drawing illustrated (Fig. 3). In this female figure the back is twisted as it is in Leonardo's child (Fig. 8), yet the forms do not revolve; note, too, that in Pontormo's sketch the right arm is held clear of the breast, and the head clear of the shoulder.

Even in the case of the head alone, or of a single hand, the Mannerists favored the picture plane. The hand appears frequently in flat frontal view, with fingers slightly spread, as in Parmigianino's *Self Portrait* in the Uffizi and Pontormo's *Corsini Madonna*. The head is ordinarily in front view or in profile. The slightly tipped head in three-quarter view, a pose so telling in Leonardo's work, would be utterly out of keeping with Mannerism.

The forms that are intercepted in Mannerism suggest interlacing rather than recession because they overlap at points that already start to recede. This may be observed in the central group of Pontormo's large *Madonna* in the Louvre, where the succession of intertwined arms and hands in no way suggests recession. Rather, the parts seem to slide into one another, each contributing to fill out the picture surface. The effect produced is essentially that of a pattern of overlapping wedges in which each holds in the next and all are of equivalent projection (Fig. 2). In Mannerist ornament the scroll worked as a regulating device to give the same interlocked effect (Fig. 4).

Interlocked layers on a larger scale may be seen in Rosso's painting of *Moses and the Daughters of Jethro*. In modern usage, the same device appears in Picasso's illustration for *Les Métamorphoses* (Fig. 6), simplified into interlocked layers of large, space-filling figures. Rosso, with a more involved incident to illustrate, has tipped up the plane in order to push the many background figures forward. This is common practice among the Mannerists.

Color also played its part in keeping the forms in line, so to speak. The orange, pink, purple, and light green of



FIG. 1—*Paris, Collection Simon: Landscape, Le Reservoir, 1909, by Picasso*

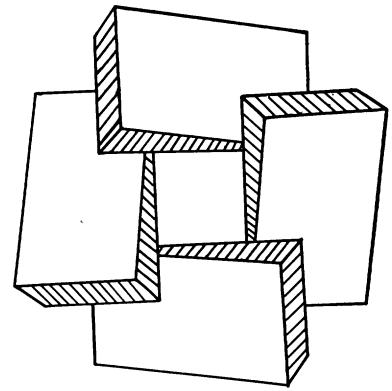


FIG. 2

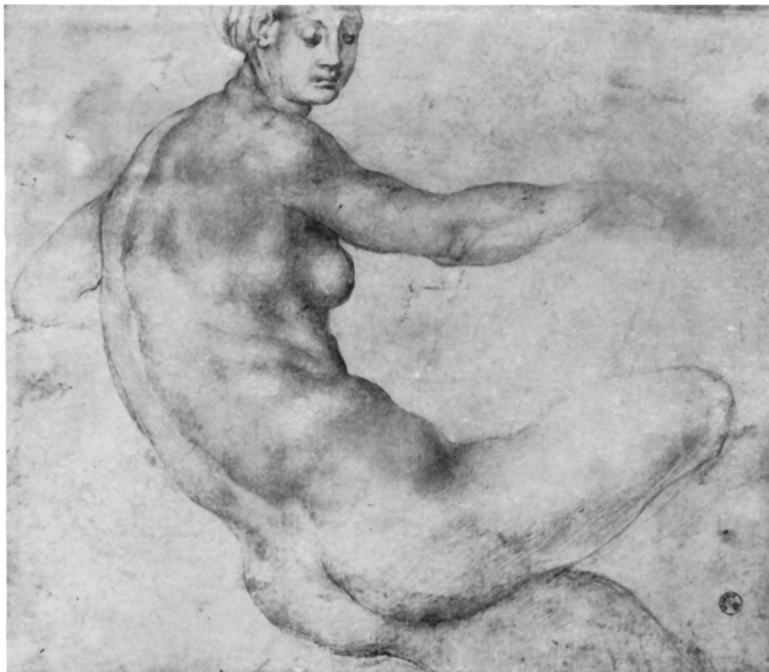


FIG. 3—*Florence, Uffizi: Drawing, by Pontormo*

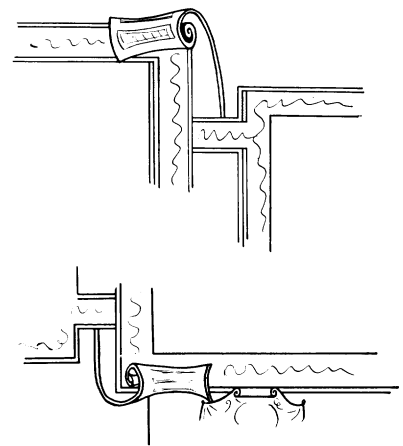


FIG. 4—*Fontainebleau, Galerie François I: Detail of Framework; Sketch*



FIG. 5—Florence, Uffizi: *Christ in Glory*; Sketch for *Lost Frescoes in S. Lorenzo*, by Pontormo

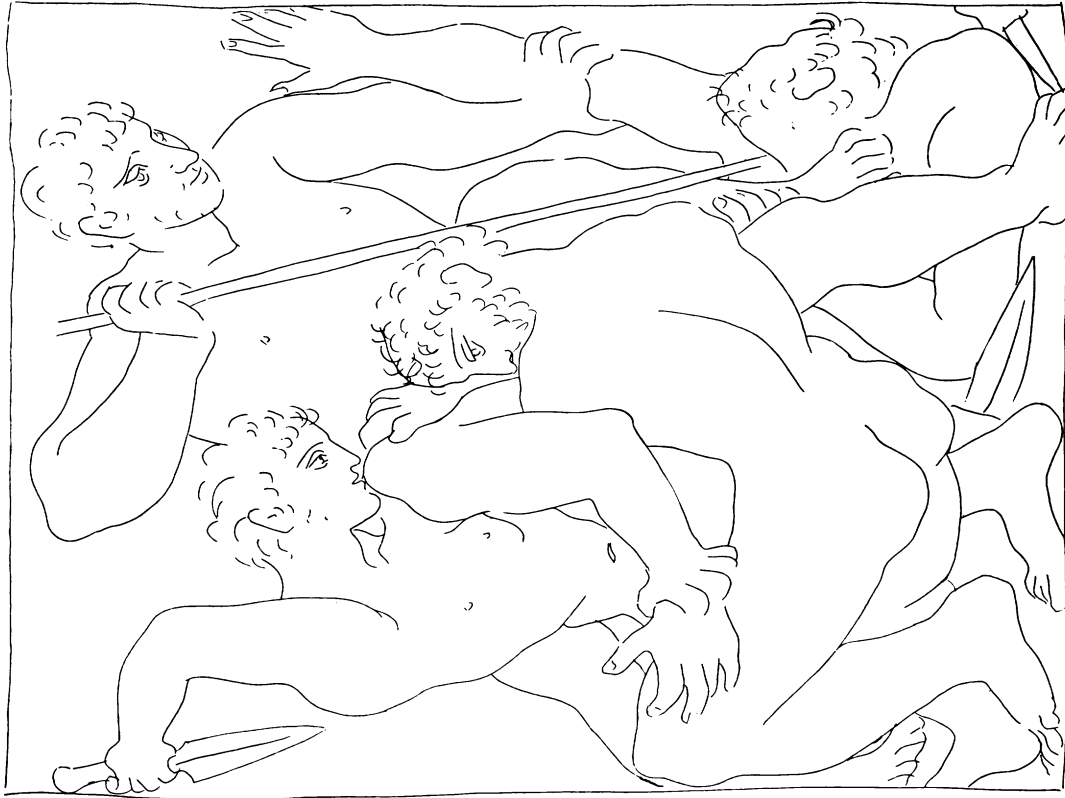


FIG. 6—Illustration for “*Les Métamorphoses*,” by Picasso; Etching



FIG. 7—Florence, Uffizi: Sketch, by Pontormo



FIG. 8—Florence, Uffizi: Sketch, by Leonardo

Pontormo's Deposition in S. Felicitá, like the striking white, green, and yellow of his Certosa frescoes, were calculated to function with equal intensity throughout, and thus avoid the projection and recession that varying intensities provide. El Greco, employing color toward a similar end, used violent colors in the distance, thus bringing far objects forward to compete with his dominating foreground figures.

The light and shade of the Mannerists, while not so abstract as their color, served the same purpose. Light was used primarily to model form, as in the Renaissance; but the modeling is restrained, and a somewhat exaggerated use of reflected light tends to flatten the shaded edges.

Atmospheric perspective was inconsistent with Mannerism. Fading off from a dark foreground to a paler distance was avoided. Even the cloudlike halo in Parmigianino's Dresden Madonna with Sts. Stephen and John the Baptist seems flattened by its sharp metallic colors, equal in intensity and in tone value.

Color and tone tend in general to be supplementary to form rather than independent tools in Mannerist painting. The dominating consideration is the careful regulation of form by all available technical devices.

Admittedly, no style can be encompassed in a single principle. But just as the principle of recession interprets the salient features of Baroque painting, the principle of the vertical plane throws light on the aesthetic intentions of the Mannerists.

NOTES ON BERNINI'S TOWERS FOR ST. PETER'S IN ROME

BY PAUL A. UNDERWOOD¹

While the problems connected with Bernini's tower designs for the façade of St. Peter's have been discussed extensively before,² none of the writers, to my knowledge, has referred to several sources which have been brought together in Oskar Pollak's compilation, *Die Kunsttätigkeit unter Urban VIII*, II, 1931, and which were apparently unknown to earlier writers. A discussion here of some aspects of the problem will perhaps be worth while in the light of this newer material.

The only extant drawing of the tower that is in the approximate form in which it was constructed, and that at the same time can be assumed to have any connection with Bernini, is the one now in the Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia³ (Fig. 1). Bernini made alternative designs which are preserved,⁴ but none of these bears much resemblance to the tower actually built. Certain questions arise concerning the Ariccia drawing. Where does it fit into the sequence of events connected with the construction and destruction of the ill-fated towers, and why was it drawn at a time when the towers were in disrepute, at about the period when demolition was ordered by a new and hostile Pope? How closely does the drawing preserve the details of the parts which were built in masonry during the years 1638 to 1643 as well as the wooden third storey which was placed in position on the south tower in 1641? Finally, what is the relation of this drawing to its supposed copies made about

fifty years later by Carlo Fontana and Filippo Bonanni?

The Ariccia design is that of a three-storied tower, above the attic of Maderno's façade. Its two lower storeys were rather square in plan, with the angles breaking out in a series of applied columns and pilasters, while the trabeated span between the angles was supported in each opening by a pair of coupled Corinthian columns in the lower, and Composite columns in the second storey.⁵ The upper storey, or *piramide*, as Bernini called it,⁶ was composed of four arched openings on the sides, between applied columns and consoles at the angles, while above, the cornice curved inward in plan. It is to be noted that at the base of the flèche is a cluster of fleur-de-lys, and, below, the shield of the stemma bears the dove and branch of the Pamfili Pope,⁷ Innocent X (1644-1655). This particular drawing, then, was made a considerable time after the construction of the tower had come to a halt in 1641. Largely because of this fact it has been assumed that it did not follow the original design for the tower which was constructed under Innocent's predecessor, Urban VIII.⁸ It has also been asserted that this drawing formed the basis for engraved copies by Carlo Fontana (Fig. 2) and Filippo Bonanni.⁹ These last two are practically identical. A noteworthy feature of both is that the shield of the stemma is left bare while the work is identified with the reign of Pope Urban VIII by means of the group of bees at the base of the flèche, in the place where the Ariccia drawing displays the fleur-de-lys. In other respects all three designs are identical.

It is not necessary to assume, as has been done, that the third storey in the Ariccia drawing, by reason of the presence of the arms of the later Pope, Innocent X, represented a modification of the Bernini design which he proposed to build and partially completed under Urban VIII. Nor is it therefore necessary to assume that since the papal identification in the engravings of Fontana and Bonanni differ from those on the Ariccia drawing, Fontana arbitrarily changed the fleurs-de-lys into the bees for the sake of historical accuracy and was followed in this error by Bonanni. In other words, it is possible that Bernini merely tried again, after having been foiled by Urban, to have the same *piramide* erected by the new Pope, Innocent X.

This suggestion, that the Ariccia design was, in all important respects, the same as that which was accepted in 1638 and immediately put into construction, is advanced because of certain documentary evidence appearing in Pollak's compilation of documents, already referred to, which have not been applied to this problem so far as I know. The most important of the documents to be considered consist of some cost accounts which describe the construction of the third storey as a wood model to be actually placed as the crowning element to the south tower. In them we learn that in May of 1641, Giovanni Battista Soria was fabricating the *piramide* in wood; that it was to be built in sections to facilitate its transportation and installation; that the entire cost was to be borne by Bernini.¹⁰ But more important, in the cost accounts we learn something of its dimensions and design.

5. Riegl, Alois, *Filippo Baldinucci's Vita des Gio. Lorenzo Bernini*, Vienna, 1912, p. 128, quoting the *Vita*, p. 25.

6. Pollak, O., *op. cit.*, II, p. 136, Reg. 293; Frascchetti, *op. cit.*, p. 162, n. 9.

7. For this detail, not visible in Fig. 1, cf. Brauer and Wittkower, *op. cit.*, pl. 155. On p. 37 they call attention to the significance of this detail, previously unobserved.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

9. *Ibid.* The engraving of Fontana appeared in his *Templum Vaticanum et ipsius origo*, Rome, 1694, p. 263; that by Bonanni in *Numismata summorum pontificum Templi Vaticani*, 1696, pl. 64, p. 151.

10. An unidentified diary records that this unfortunate model cost Bernini 25,000 scudi. Cf. Pollak, *op. cit.*, p. 142, Reg. 315. Bernini undertook the burden because his reputation was at stake. Cf. his letter to Soria, *ibid.* p. 135, Reg. 293, dated 1641, May 28. Also in Frascchetti, *op. cit.*, p. 162, n. 9.

1. These notes are an outgrowth of a study made by the author *Drawings of Saint Peter's on a Pilgrim Staff in the Museo Sacro of the Vatican*, forthcoming in the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, London, in which are further reproductions (some previously unpublished) of the towers.

2. Brauer and Wittkower, *Die Zeichnungen des Gianlorenzo Bernini*, 1931, text, pp. 37-43, give the most recent and concise review of the material and bibliography relating to the history of the tower, but several important documents have come to light since their publication and modify some of their interpretations.

3. Brauer and Wittkower, *op. cit.*, pls. 154a, 155, list it as a workshop drawing. Cf. Frascchetti, *Il Bernini*, p. 163.

4. Rome, *Cod. vat. lat.* 13442, f. 4; f. 3. Cf. Brauer and Wittkower, *op. cit.*, pls. 156, 157.