

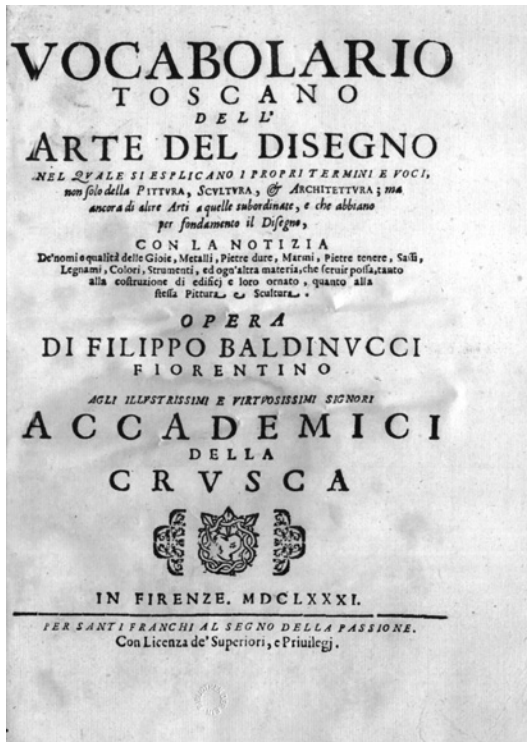
Eva Struhal

Filippo Baldinucci's Autopsies.

Autopsy and Art Theory in the Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno (1681) and His Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi (1681)

Although one of the most frequently used sources on the Italian *Seicento*, the writings of the Florentine art historian Filippo Baldinucci (1624–1671) remain understudied.¹ This lack of scrutiny extends to his critical investigation of the lives of artists in the *Notizie de' Professori del Disegno*, published after 1681. Meanwhile, his other important project, the *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno*, has frequently been dismissed as nothing more than a vehicle for him to gain access to the *Accademia della Crusca*.² Baldinucci's minor writings, the *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi* (1681), the *Lettera a Lorenzo Gualtieri* (1682), *La Veglia: Dialogo di Sincero Veri* (1684), and the *Lezione per l'Accademia del Disegno* (1691) have received even less critical attention.³

As a consequence, our image of Baldinucci as an art theorist is highly contradictory: while some scholars reject the idea that Baldinucci's writings embody significant theoretical or methodological advancement, others think that his historical approach is rigorous and therefore more ›modern‹ than that of his predecessor Giorgio Vasari.⁴ I propose that the reason for such dissonant evaluations lies in the historical and methodological framework applied to Baldinucci's projects, in particular the attention given to studying these projects through the lens of a traditional concept of the Baroque. The traditional view of the Baroque includes a demand for rhetorical brilliance and idealistic aesthetics best represented by Baldinucci's Roman colleague Giovanni Pietro Bellori in his *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni*, often called »the Bible of seventeenth-century art history.«⁵ In contrast, I study Baldinucci's writings in the context of contemporary developments in Florentine natural philosophy. By drawing interdisciplinary parallels with the history of science, such an approach to Baldinucci's writings mirrors the interdisciplinary environment that dominated the cultural life of Florence during the *Seicento*. This period was dominated by a backbone of literary, artistic, and



1. Titlepage of Filippo Baldinucci, *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno*, Florence 1681. ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Rar 6871, <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-767/> Public Domain Mark.

scientific academies that fostered a tight network of personal and professional relationships across the disciplines. Although some such interactions – particularly Galileo's friendships with artists – have been explored, the broader impact of these social ties affecting Florentine art and culture after Galileo's death remains understudied.⁶ A look at Baldinucci's oeuvre through the lens of the »other Seicento« – an angle not reduced to concerns of an idealized aesthetic, but one that embraces the interdisciplinary world of early modern intellectual life in which interests in natural philosophy co-existed and fused with those of art history – will help us to better evaluate Baldinucci's writings.⁷

In line with the focus of the conference, I will study two texts by Baldinucci, his *Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno*, Florence 1681,

(fig. 1) and *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi*, Florence 1681 (fig. 2), in order to highlight his concepts of autopsy. These reveal the multiple routes and multidisciplinary roots that characterized autopsy at the threshold of what Lorraine Daston has termed the »age of observation« as the disciplines of rhetoric, poetry, and natural philosophy began to merge.⁸ With his *Vocabolario*, Baldinucci aimed to create a unified artistic language for communication between connoisseurs and artists. The *Vocabolario* explained artistic processes and defined art theoretical and workshop terminology. Baldinucci operated with a concept of autopsy which shares the strategies used by early modern scientists, that have been termed »virtual witnessing« by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer.⁹ The process of »virtual witnessing« gave those who did not have direct access to experiments or particular scientific processes the

opportunity to experience these settings through detailed written descriptions and images.

In the *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi* Baldinucci carved out the professional profile of the *perito*, the knowledgeable judge of artistic quality, attribution, and originality. Here Baldinucci employed another concept that mirrors contemporary tendencies in natural philosophy: that of the Aristotelian category of *habitus* – a trained disposition – as essential structure through which a *perito* develops his autoptic skills.¹⁰

Baldinucci's Autopsies

According to Baldinucci the *Vocabolario* and the *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi* venture into yet uncharted art theoretical terrain. In both cases, Baldinucci established his authority for the body of knowledge he created by emphasizing autopsy – personal observation, seeing for oneself – as the key to the acquisition of authentic and authoritative knowledge.

As can be gathered from the writings of Count Cesare Malvasia, Baldinucci's Bolognese rival in the art historical field, autopsy was considered an innovative art historical research method, imported from natural philosophy. One often-cited example of Malvasia's innovative approach to art history is the introduction to *Le Pitture di Bologna*, Bologna 1686, where he claimed that all of his historical assertions were based on visual observation («oculare ispezione»¹¹). Malvasia explicitly modeled his «oculare ispezione» on contemporary experimental science – as it was practiced in Florence and London – and declared that only empirically-based historiographical writing could help overcome unquestioned belief in older authorities.



2. Titlepage of Filippo Baldinucci, *Lettera di Filippo Baldinucci a Vincenzo Capponi*, Rome 1681. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 72.Y.74 ALT PRUNK, <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC09678465>.

Both of Baldinucci's texts discussed here insist on the importance of autopsy; both predate Malvasia's demonstrative reference to scientific autopsy and do not explicitly highlight the connection with contemporary natural philosophy. Baldinucci's concept of autopsy differs from a strictly scientific one in two essential aspects: he does not necessarily need to be the observer himself and his observations do not translate into detailed descriptions, attentive to everything observable. As Anthony Pagden has noted, the effect of »seeing for oneself« can be mediated through other, equally authoritative eyes that vouch for the validity of the knowledge they create.¹² Thomas Leinkauf expands the concept of autopsy and underscores its potential as the initial moment in an epistemic process.¹³ Baldinucci's concept of autopsy and its written representations reveal the hybrid nature of this epistemic concept contemporaneous with the rise of the New Science. Autopsy belongs to the broader category of observation, the contours and historical development of which for the history of science have been outlined by Lorraine Daston and Gianna Pomata.¹⁴ However, for other fields of research such as the humanities, comprehensive investigations of epistemic habits are still lacking. Therefore, there is no study focusing explicitly on the many cultural roots of autopsy before it became an essential epistemic ingredient of the experimental natural philosophy. Such cultural roots might include the theological importance of the authoritative witness of martyrdoms and miracles to autopsy's importance in literature as part of an aesthetic of experience, which Ezio Raimondi considers an essential aspect of the seventeenth century.¹⁵ Baldinucci's complex and multifaceted concept of autopsy is further proof that, like historians of science, art historians ought to study the history of observation during the early modern period.

To reemphasize the fluid nature of autopsy in early modern culture, it is important to underscore that Baldinucci operated with varying concepts of autopsy: in the *Vocabolario*, he employed mediated autopsy or *virtual witnessing* in order to create mental images of artistic processes and art theoretical principles in his readers' imagination; in the *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi*, he established autopsy as the main epistemic and professional virtue of the art connoisseur [*perito*]. While the *Vocabolario* associates autoptic authority with the disembodied, anonymous, and collective voice of Florentine artists for whom Baldinucci only served as a compiler, the *Lettera* describes an »exclusive epistemological relationship« between the connoisseur and the objects that he studies through first-hand experience.¹⁶ In both cases, autopsy appears to

be structured through epistemic concepts that were used outside of natural philosophy: in the *Vocabolario*, it creates an experience of elliptic visuality that could be described as epigrammatic, in the *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi*, it is structured by the Aristotelian concept of *habitus*.

How to Turn Artistic Practice into a Mental Image: *Virtual Witnessing and Epigrammatic Autopsy* in the *Vocabolario dell'Arte del Disegno*

Baldinucci's introduction to the *Vocabolario* promises to make the specific vocabulary of artists accessible to *intendenti*. The *Vocabolario's* exhaustive list of verbs, nouns, and adjectives is intended for connoisseurs of the arts, and thus, it provides insight into artistic techniques by describing different aspects of artistic practice.¹⁷ The *Vocabolario* does not include any illustrations of instruments, materials, or artistic techniques. Instead, Baldinucci declares that in order to describe artistic techniques and art-theoretical terms to his readers, he will conjure mental images in their minds so that the »rational part of their soul« will form for itself »a complete understanding [*intero concetto*]« of each described term.¹⁸ His representation of the world of artistic practice and its vocabulary relies heavily on the rhetorical technique of *evidentia*, the capacity of language to evoke the presence of objects, persons, or situations through »clear and vivid« descriptions in which language quasi »radiates through itself.«¹⁹ Baldinucci's *concetti* transform themselves in a sequence of metamorphoses from action to description and then to visualization suggesting that the author strongly believed in the unshakeable authority of »true images« in creating knowledge either through visual representation or through mental images created through language.²⁰ Such focus on visuality for understanding was shared by a host of early modern intellectuals in various disciplines. As Wimböck, Leonhard, and others maintain, *evidentia*, as authority of claims based on visual experience, played an essential role in the early modern sciences as well as in the representation of cognitive processes.²¹ Early modern autopsy, therefore, lifts the specific into the realm of the generic, a process that detaches subjective experience »from the personal and creative contexts in which they had [...] occurred.«²²

Baldinucci's *Vocabolario* participates fully in the transportation of experiential knowledge into cultural contexts that lack this first-hand experience, a dynamic that parallels the description of experiments in scientific contexts.

Baldinucci's authorial goal therefore shares essential characteristics with the concept *virtual witnessing* highlighted by Shapin and Schaffer as a literary tool employed by the British scientist Robert Boyle (1627–1691). Boyle's illustrations and detailed descriptions of experimental processes aim to convey experimental activity so concretely that the reader can replicate these processes. Similarly, Baldinucci was explicitly interested in enabling his readers to experience artistic practice through mental images in order to create a new kind of knowledge. *Virtual witnessing* also was an essential element of the *Accademia del Cimento's* programmatic publication, *Saggi di naturali esperienze* (Florence 1667), which included illustrations in addition to descriptions in order to enable its readers to develop their understanding of instruments and the academy's experimental culture. The *Cimento's* founder, Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, was also an influential figure for Baldinucci's *Vocabolario*.²³ For example, in their *Saggi di naturali esperienze*, members of the *Accademia del Cimento* meticulously described their experiments so that members from other scientific communities could repeat these.²⁴ This innovative desire for first-hand experience as a form of knowledge transmission transforms individualized, subjective observations and experiences into a collective epistemic truth.²⁵

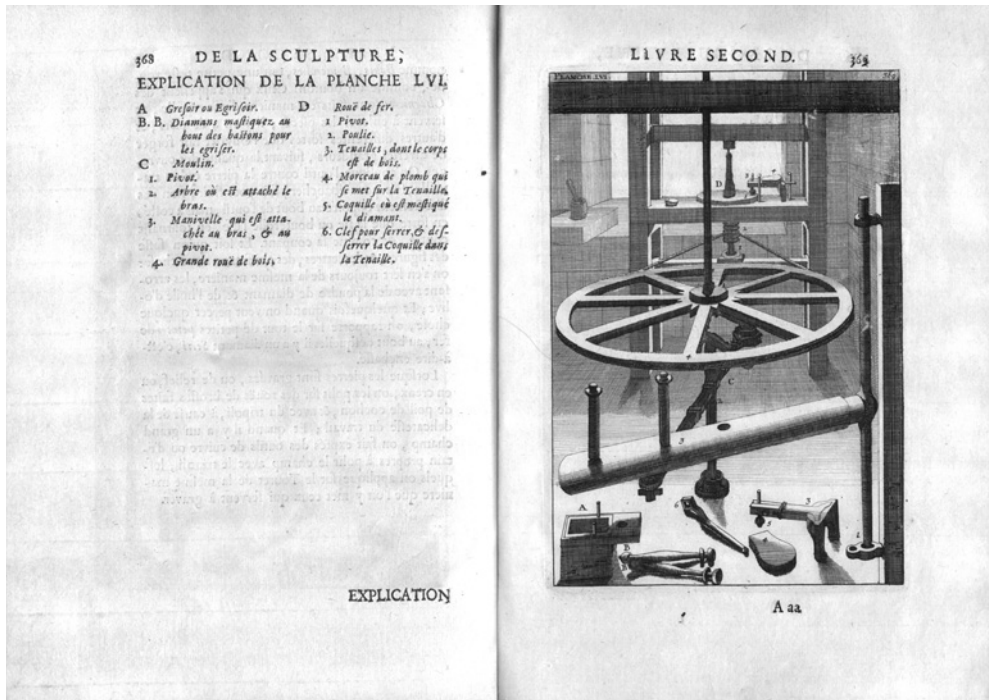
Yet, how can an unillustrated dictionary convey autoptic experience to its readers? The introduction to the *Vocabolario* highlights as examples the entries for »Lavorar d'incavo o intagliare in Cameo« (Carving Cameos) and »Cameo, Onice« (Cameo, Onyx).²⁶ These entries describe the material difficulties in this working method in such a way that an outsider might feel they have firsthand experience. This is achieved by explicitly referring to the stone's hardness. However, both dictionary entries mentioned in the introduction as underscoring Baldinucci's technique do not correspond with exact lemmas in the *Vocabolario*. Therefore, in order to find out how to work cameos one must look up a series of other entries, such as the entry »Lavoro d'incavo«, the lemma »intagliare«, and the lemma »Cammeo«.²⁷ For example, under the lemma »Lavoro d'incavo«, Baldinucci described the artistic process, »Labour of carving [sic]« as »what is done with wheels in jaspers, agates, amethysts [...] making heads or other things appear in those stones.«²⁸

He further explained that these engraved reliefs are so profound that they can be filled with wax and then used as a seal. If we follow Baldinucci's claim and let his entry on carving precious stones conjure up a mental image in our mind, several blind spots remain: for example, the verb »do« with which

he describes the act of carving does not result in a precise image nor do the instruments called »wheels« aptly differentiate the specialized instruments employed by artisans. The description of working stones as »making heads and other things appear« also results in an imprecise rendition of this activity. The lack of specifics in this description presents a hurdle to the reader understanding the material challenges of working stone due to its hardness and other material tests, which Baldinucci considered essential for democratizing the experience of artistic labor.²⁹

While Baldinucci's general authorial goal was identical to the concept of *virtual witnessing* outlined by Shapin and Schaffer, he may have pursued different literary goals than those outlined for the scientists. According to both scholars, Boyle does not aim to represent an idea of actions and instruments, but a particular and concrete description of them.³⁰ Boyle's illustrations and descriptions of experimental activity aimed to replicate the experimental processes described; Baldinucci's dictionary on the other hand attempted to offer a complete understanding of concepts. While Boyle crafted elaborate sentences including circumstantial details in order to fully represent the immediate experimental experience, Baldinucci aimed for clarity but knew his readers were unlikely to repeat the artistic practices personally.

Although following the general goals of scientific writings, the task of authoring a dictionary had its own and rather different formal challenges, such as a demand for brevity in individual entries, resulting in blind spots in Baldinucci's definitions. These become evident when comparing his entries on stone carving with André Félibien's four page illustrated description of the technique »De la Gravure sur les Pierres précieuses et sur les Cristaux.« Félibien's art theoretical treatise, *Des Principes de l'Architecture, Sculpture et Peinture* (Paris 1676), appeared slightly earlier and may have served as a source for Baldinucci's *Vocabolario*.³¹ Despite Baldinucci's declared aim of rendering descriptions of artistic practices quasi visible, Félibien's descriptions accompanied by illustrations and explanations of the instruments involved, render them incomparably more present and imaginable for the reader.³² Félibien not only distinguished between the techniques that carve out the form (»gravure en creux«) from those that take away the background and leave the motif in relief (»gravure en relief«) but also included a history of stone carving. While Baldinucci's entry »lavoro d'incavo« only mentions the technique of »gravure en creux« his entry for »cammeo« does not mention



3. André Félibien, *Des principes de l'architecture, de la sculpture, de la peinture, et des autres arts qui en dependent* : avec un dictionnaire des termes propres à chacun de ces arts, Paris 1690, p. 368/69. ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Rar 642, <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-1162> / Public Domain Mark.

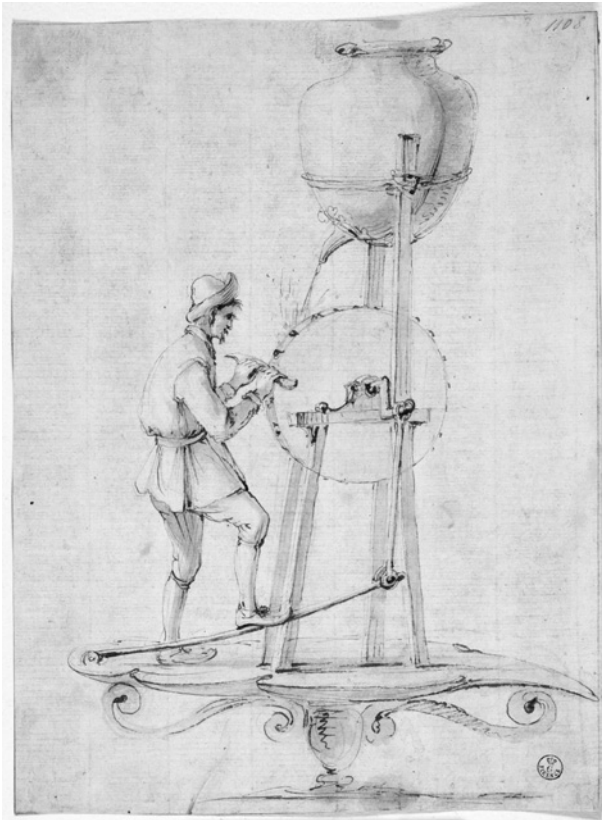
alternative ways of working precious stones. In addition, Baldinucci did not describe the instruments employed in detail – both entries refer to »ruote« (wheels) – while Félibien provides a detailed, diversified, and illustrated terminology of instruments used for working stone (fig. 3).³³

By stating that he intends to transform words into *concetti* and ultimately into mental images, Baldinucci employed a particular kind of *evidentia*, similar to the ideal of emblematic thinking, which has been at the core of Mario Praz's celebrated book, *Seventeenth-Century Imagery*.³⁴ Praz traces the creation of visual emblems through language back to Petrarch. He also quotes Denis Diderot's description of a phenomenon similar to that evoked in the *Vocabolario's* introduction: »[...] les choses sont *dites et représentées tout à la fois* [emphasis added]; que dans le même temps que l'entendement les saisit; l'âme en est emuë, l'imagination les voit, & l'oreille les entend.«³⁵ As Praz points

out, the emblem is the central site of the interconnectedness of visibility and language, which reaches its peak during the seventeenth century. Praz specifies, »Emblems are [...] things which illustrate a conceit; epigrams are words (a conceit) which illustrate objects. The two are therefore complementary.«³⁶ Highlighting the complementarity of visibility and language, Praz argues that during the seventeenth century they frequently were mixed for synergistic effect. As others before him, Praz states that emblems are an early modern form of hieroglyphs, an ideographical scripture associated with the representation of divine ideas, objects, or concepts of elevated status.³⁷

Although Baldinucci did not follow the typical techniques of the emblem in his descriptions of terms in the *Vocabolario* he appears to have shared the ideals of emblematic thinking: textual brevity and an evocation of mental images. However, in Baldinucci's *Vocabolario*, it is every-day actions and workshop terminology but not lofty concepts that undergo this double metamorphosis from action to description and then to – at least attempted – visualization. In using words to evoke mental images, the *Vocabolario* subscribes to the authority of »first-hand observation and autoptic proof«, thereby paralleling contemporary epistemic tendencies in natural philosophy.³⁸

The parallels with natural philosophy can be extended to Baldinucci's self-representation as author. Scholars working on the *Accademia del Cimento* emphasize that the *Saggi* were intentionally written in a neutral style thereby suppressing the individual authorial voice in favor of an objective representation of the academy's experiments, which were considered the only key to »fitting effects to causes and causes to effects«. ³⁹ Natural philosophical texts provided a canon for communicating first-hand experience to colleagues and readers who were not physically present for the experiments. For example, Christian Licoppe noted how in French accounts, the desire to present autopsy as collective experience transforms the enouncing subject from »je« to »on«. ⁴⁰ The collective production of knowledge based on empiricism and first-hand experience also resulted in an eviction of the authorial voice in the proceedings of the scientific *Accademia del Cimento*. ⁴¹ For example, the *Saggi's* author, Lorenzo Magalotti used the title page to emphasize that he was not the author of the text, but an observer who described other's experiments. Similarly, Baldinucci suppressed his individual, auctorial voice by underscoring that his dictionary was a mere collection of art theoretical terminology representing artistic practice. ⁴²



4. Baccio del Bianco, *Table ornament, pen and ink over black chalk and wash on paper*, Florence, *Gabinetti dei disegni e delle stampe degli Uffizi*, inv. 1108 orn. © Su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.

It is particularly this striving for a quasi-autotic effect on the reader in an impersonal authorial voice that distinguishes Baldinucci's concept of autopsy from other literary forms predominant in the early modern era, such as the concept of autopsy as first-person narrative that was – as Anthony Pagden has demonstrated – the claim to the authority of travel accounts in early modern Europe.⁴³ In fact, as Pagden stresses, the credibility of these narratives is inseparably tied to the eyes and the body of the authoritative eye witness.

Despite the inclusion of the reader as virtual witness, the lack of visual clues in the *Vocabolario's* descriptions suggests that Baldinucci found it sufficient – maybe in line with the format of the dictionary – to represent specific actions in a quasi-epigrammatic form, creating an emblematic form of autopsy. Baldinucci's emblematic representation of everyday action, however, finds parallels in visual representations associated with two other important Florentine cultural contexts: the art produced by court artists such as Baccio del Bianco for the Medici court (1604–1657) and the *pale* of the *Accademia della Crusca*, under whose auspices the *Vocabolario* was produced. Baccio del Bianco's design of a table ornament representing a knife sharpener (fig. 4) shares important characteristics with Baldinucci's presentation of artistic practice in his *Vocabolario*:

singled out from its broader chain of action, elevated through its ornamental base, and, presumably, also through its usage on a festive table, Baccio's drawing transports the mundane act of sharpening a knife into a quasi-emblematic structure.⁴⁴ Massimiliano Rossi has highlighted how the *Accademia della Crusca* in their self-presentation and emblematic decorations elevated common everyday concepts into lofty emblems. A good example is the *Crusca's* emblem, a grain mill which is combined with an elevated motto: »Il più bel fiore ne coglie«⁴⁵ (fig. 5). The deliberate contrast resulting from a hybrid aesthetic between the profane grain mill and the elevated poetic motto also informs Baldinucci's adaptation of the *conchetto*-logic to workshop practices of artists.



5. Titlepage of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Venice 1612. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vocabolario_della_Crusca_1612.jpg.

Habitus, Autopsy, Judgment: The Epistemic Virtues of Baldinucci's perito

Baldinucci's *Lettera nella quale risponde ad alcuni quesiti in materie di Pittura all'Illustrissimo, e Clarissimo Signor Marchese, e Senatore Vincenzio Capponi, Logotenente nell'Accademia del Disegno*, Florence 1681, promotes the concept of autopsy as the most legitimate method for gaining knowledge and arriving at an authoritative judgment about questions of the attribution of paintings and the questions of copy or original.⁴⁶ Polemicizing against connoisseurs who attribute paintings through hear-say, Baldinucci states programmatically:

»The eyes and not the ears have to be consulted in the judgment about good paintings [...]«.47

In this letter, Baldinucci carves out the professional identity of the *perito* (expert) – the able judge of artistic quality as well as style and the arbiter of attributions of paintings. Baldinucci's *perito* is best described as a theoretician of practice. Although he is not a practicing artist, Baldinucci underscores that only *periti* who are able to understand the technical intricacies involved in the production of works of art can be trusted in their judgment.⁴⁸ Early in the letter Baldinucci states that he will attempt to address the following four issues: 1. whether only the experienced Professor of the Arts (i.e. artist) can answer questions pertaining to the art of painting, 2. how to decide whether a painting is a copy or an original, 3. how to attribute paintings to a specific artist, 4. to understand better the use of copies.

The letter precedes the publication of the first volume of the *Notizie*. It is addressed to the representative of the grand duke at the *Accademia del Disegno* and is probably motivated by the desire to legitimize Baldinucci's own position as art critic and connoisseur. But how does Baldinucci insert the *perito* as a legitimate agent into the context of the arts?

Similar to his claims regarding the *Vocabolario*, Baldinucci asserts that his *Lettera* presents innovative subject matter that has not been discussed by any other author.⁴⁹ However, it has been frequently pointed out that Baldinucci draws heavily on the Siense doctor, Giulio Mancini's, earlier text, *Considerazioni appartenenti alla Pittura*, written in Rome during the 1620s.⁵⁰ Mancini addressed similar questions concerning the authority of the *perito* (employing the same term),⁵¹ because like Baldinucci, Mancini considered himself a *perito*.⁵² Both Baldinucci and Mancini wrote for an audience of connoisseurs and collectors and therefore were specifically interested in questions concerning the attribution of paintings and how to distinguish copies from originals. Like Baldinucci's *Lettera*, Mancini's first chapter of the *Considerazioni* focuses on defining the legitimacy of the *perito's* judgment. Mancini presented the ability to evaluate art as one of the required skills of the *uomo civile* (the well-educated citizen), who has been instructed in the art of drawing. For Mancini, painting was embedded into the world as an »imitation of the things that are to be found in this world.«⁵³ It should therefore be subjected to the same ethical and intellectual values that prevail in general culture.⁵⁴ Mancini's *perito* is an able judge of painting for two reasons: he is a universally educated erudite

(»peritia e cognition universal dell' alter cose«) and instructed in the art of drawing.⁵⁵

Baldinucci and Mancini adapt the Aristotelian category of *habitus* [[h]abito] as the essential structure through which the *perito* develops his skills.⁵⁶ In its initial Aristotelian formulation, the notion of *habitus* refers to a trained disposition to engage in certain modes of activity stimulated through particular objects or situations.⁵⁷ The Roman rhetorician Quintilian in his *De inventione* underscores the impact of mental and physical education and instruction on the *habitus*.⁵⁸ For Mancini and Baldinucci the term *habitus* bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge about art and its practical dimension. A *perito's* sense of judgment is honed by repeated exposure to artworks such that judging artworks becomes a second nature, essentially informing his intellectual disposition. For example, Mancini distinguishes the *habito* of the *perito* from the »habito pittoresco/artificioso.«⁵⁹ The »habito pittoresco« is informed by the artists' creative fantasy, but lacks the sense of rational judgment necessary for the *perito* to assess quality and originality in works of art.⁶⁰ Baldinucci defines *abito* as: »The habitus is a firm quality that cannot be lost or changed without difficulty.«⁶¹ The art theorist considers as essential element that the *perito* have frequent opportunities for the first hand observation of art works: »[...] ma che la regola veramente sia, che il perito solamente, [...] che per lungo tempo ha camminato per le difficoltà di quella, che ha vedute infinite opera d'Artefici di prima riga, possa darne un retto, e sicuro giudizio.«⁶² In contrast to Mancini's, Baldinucci's *perito* is able to arrive at sound judgment about artworks without practicing art (»con poco uso di mano«). Baldinucci therefore distinguishes the *perito's* judgment from artists' »disposizione all'Arte«, that he feels can make it harder for them to judge art from a critical distance.⁶³ Such a strict hiatus between theory and practice, however, is refined by Baldinucci's demand that the *perito* be thoroughly informed about artistic practice. Since Baldinucci's *perito* is not artistically active, autopsy becomes his major point of access to the world of artistic practice.

While Baldinucci's definition of the *perito* has – if discussed at all – been considered as a derivative of Mancini's, it is important to highlight differences both authors establish in describing this new professional profile. While Mancini's *perito* envisions an individual with hands-on experience in the arts, Baldinucci turns the *perito* from an active participant into an informed spectator and theoretical arbiter of practice.

Recently, Mark Thomas Young has contested the broadly accepted theory that early modern natural philosophy with its focus on direct observation and immediate experience developed seamlessly from the world of artisanal natural investigations.⁶⁴ Young underscores fundamental phenomenological differences between artisanal and philosophical productions of knowledge about nature. He argues that rather than actively engaging with nature and its processes as did the artisans, seventeenth-century experimental science privileged forms of knowledge that engaged with the world »as spectacles«, performed in the presence of large audiences.⁶⁵ Young investigates the practices that developed in connection with this spectatorship-based concept of knowledge creation. Two aspects merit mention in connection with Baldinucci's *Lettera*: the most relevant aspect is the fact that spectatorship naturally decontextualizes experience in that – like optical instruments – it amplifies certain characteristics but also limits the extent of what can be understood solely through observation. Baldinucci's definition of connoisseurship was based on a spectator-relationship with artistic practice and its preferred epistemic setting was Cardinal Leopoldo's collection of drawings. In such settings, autopsy – trained and structured by *habitus* (experience) – becomes the *perito's* primary epistemic tool. A work of art is not judged according to subjective aesthetic preferences, but is turned into an instrument of knowledge, which reveals the secrets of its creation under the dissecting gaze of the *perito* and provides answers to questions of authorship. For the context of natural philosophy, Jean-Francois Gauvin has highlighted the interconnectedness of »instruments of knowledge« – in his case scientific instruments – and the particular *habitus* they demanded, a »special training [...] which involved either mind and/or body« of the scientist.⁶⁶ Baldinucci's instrument of knowledge of choice is the drawing, which he explicitly and innovatively categorizes as »opera«, a complete work of art.⁶⁷ It is the drawing that most clearly reveals the artist's personal style through its uninhibited strokes, its »franchezza« (sincerity).⁶⁸ Like scientific instruments for natural philosophers, a drawing for Baldinucci was the way to access ›systematic truth‹.

Although the focus on disembodied observation parallels epistemic virtues developed in the context of early modern natural philosophy, Baldinucci's ›scientific‹ approach yields results that are less certain than those obtained by his scientific colleagues. Even in the face of the universal rule of the *franchezza* (›universal regola‹) that can be usually taken as authentic traces (›vestigia«)

of the artist's unique talent, the *perito* cannot be completely certain that he is not faced with a copy by a skilled imitator who aims to pass off his copy for an original »opera«. ⁶⁹ In order to enhance the possibility of reaching a reliable attribution, Baldinucci creates a checklist of firsthand observations that constitute the »regole ordinarie, delle quali si vagliono i Periti per giudicare se le pitture siano originali, o copie.« ⁷⁰ These rules include criteria such as how the painter applies color (»macchiare«) and how he represents the folds of clothes (»panneggiare«). ⁷¹ In establishing a universal, experience-based rules guide for a *perito*, Baldinucci creates »epistemic virtues« for judging authorship in the arts. In contrast to the impersonal voice of autopsy in the *Vocabolario*, Baldinucci's letter embeds autoptic experience in the figure of the *perito*, who is capable of delivering »trained judgment« on the arts. ⁷²

Despite this innovative approach toward the analysis of art Baldinucci's major writings, his *Notizie*, are informed by different considerations. While Baldinucci, the *perito*, is interested in autopsy, meta-historical structures, and stylistic connoisseurship, Baldinucci, the historian, is interested in approaching lives of artists as a collection of exempla or anti-exempla. At the center of the lives are the artists' good and bad actions (»azioni, buone o ree«) that would prove useful for human conversation so that reading the biographies leads to a facetious, delightful, and pleasant educational experience. ⁷³ This traditional approach to life writing suggests that even during the period termed by Lorraine Daston as the »empire of observation«, during which (firsthand) observation created new forms of knowledge in the domain of art theory, the translation of immediate, autoptic observation into language was more complicated, obstructed by traditional literary genres. ⁷⁴ I see Baldinucci's framings of the *perito* as well as that of the art object as an instrument of knowledge as a big step towards art history's transformation into a descriptive science, one in which one of the highest goals is to impart detailed observations. However, the translation of observation into language in art history was not as seamless as it was in the field of natural philosophy. Baldinucci's different concepts of autopsy reveal the multiple routes and multi-disciplinary roots this epistemic virtue took at the threshold of the »age of observation.« ⁷⁵

Notes

I wish to thank my colleague Jean-François Gauvin for his careful reading of the article and his helpful suggestions; Irina Schmiedel, Unmil Karadkar, and Claire Neesham for the close reading of my text.

- 1 On Filippo Baldinucci, see most recently STRUHAL 2016; see also BAROCCHI 1975; GOLDBERG 1988; PERINI 1988; BICKENDORF 1998, p. 105–122; SOHM 2001.
- 2 On the *Vocabolario*, see most recently STRUHAL 2018; see also SOHM 2001, p. 165–184; BÄTSCHMANN 2014.
- 3 An exception is the discussion of Baldinucci's *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi* in BICKENDORF 1998, p. 52–63.
- 4 See STRUHAL 2016.
- 5 BELL/WILLETTE 2001, p. 1. On Bellori, see most recently BELLORI/OY-MARRA/WEDDINGEN/BRUG 2018–2023; see also BOREA 2000; BELL/WILLETTE 2002.
- 6 The bibliography on Galileo is extensive: see most recently BREDEKAMP 2009; see also TOSI 1999 and the still valid books by COCHRANE 1961 and 1973. See also the work of Filippo Camerota; for example, CAMEROTA 2007 and GALLUZZI 2001.
- 7 See the important recent volume by FRASCARELLI 2016.
- 8 DASTON 2013.
- 9 SHAPIN/SCHAFFER 1985, p. 60–65.
- 10 For the literature on the concept of *habitus*, see footnote 55.
- 11 MALVASIA 1686, p. 3. On this passage, see PERINI 1988, p. 273; BICKENDORF 1998, p. 120–122; CROPPER 2013, p. 100f.
- 12 See for example PAGDEN 1993, esp. chapter 2: *The Autoptic Imagination*, p. 51–87.
- 13 LEINKAUF 2017, vol. 2, p. 1459–1462.
- 14 DASTON 2011.
- 15 For example RAIMONDI 1990, p. 18. For *autopsia* in theological or devotional contexts, see BEHRMANN 2014.
- 16 A very useful essay that I used as background reading for this article is YOUNG 2017, p. 76.
- 17 For a more detailed study of the relationship, see STRUHAL 2018.
- 18 BALDINUCCI 1681, p. X.
- 19 KEMMANN 1996.
- 20 WIMBÖCK/LEONHARD/FRIEDRICH 2007, p. 13.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 13–38.
- 22 YOUNG 2017, p. 75.
- 23 On the importance of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici for Baldinucci's *Vocabolario*, see Struhal 2018. On Cardinal Leopoldo, see the recent exhibition catalogue CONTICELLI/GENNAIOLI/SFRAMELI 2017.
- 24 On the *Accademia del Cimento* and their experimentalism, see BERETTA 2000; GALLUZZI 2001.
- 25 On the »collective voice« of the *Accademia del Cimento* that was at the foundation of the *Saggi*, see BOSCHIERO 2007, p. 184.
- 26 BALDINUCCI 1681, p. X.
- 27 For »Lavoro d'incavo«, see *ibid.*, p. 81; for »intagliare«, *ibid.*, p. 77; for »cameo«, *ibid.*, p. 29.

- 28 Ibid., p. 81: »Quello che si fa per via di ruote ne' Diaspri, Agate, Amatiste, Calcidoni, Sardoni, Lapislazzuli, Corniole, Grisoliti, Cammei, ed altre pietre Orientali e ne' Cristalli, facendo in esse comparire teste, o altre cose, non di rilievo, ma affondate talmente, che riempiendo que' voti di molle cera, rimanga improntata, di schiacciato o ammaccato rilievo, la figura: e serve ancora questo lavoro, a far suggelli, siccome madri per far medaglie e monete, incavando i punzoni d'acciaio, co' quali esse poi si coniano.«
- 29 Ibid., p. 26: »Cammeo: Una pietra dura faldata, cioè che sopra è d'un colore, e sotto d'un altro; nella quale, a forza di ruote, s'intagliano di basso stacciato rilievo, o basso rilievo, bellissime teste, figure, e animali; levando tanto del primo colore, quanto bisogna per far restare sotto il campo di color diverso. Gli antichi fecero in questa sorta di lavoro opere mirabili, che a' tempi nostri non anno prezzo; moltissime delle quali si trovano nella real Galleria de' Serenissimi Granduchi di Toscana. V. Niccolo.«
- 30 SHAPIN/SCHAFFER 1985, p. 61.
- 31 For the relationship between both texts, see BÄTSCHMANN 2014; STRUHAL 2018.
- 32 FÉLIBIEN 1676, p. 358–371.
- 33 Ibid., p. 364.
- 34 PRAZ 1964.
- 35 DIDEROT 1751, p. 152f. For the passage's insertion into the discussion of the concepts of emblem, device, epigrams and conceits, see PRAZ 1964, p. 14.
- 36 Ibid., p. 23.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 See SMITH 2006, p. 89; see also MAGALOTTI 1667, p. 2.
- 39 See BOSCHIERO 2007, p. 2; see also BERETTA 2000.
- 40 LICOPPE 1994, p. 205.
- 41 For the authoritarian non-subjectivity of natural philosophical texts, see LICOPPE 1994, p. 214–224; see also BOSCHIERO 2007, p. 184.
- 42 BALDINUCCI 1681, p. VII.
- 43 PAGDEN 1993, p. 51–87.
- 44 For Baccio del Bianco's drawings, see most recently MAGUREANU 2011.
- 45 ROSSI 2007.
- 46 BALDINUCCI 1687. The letter has been analyzed mainly by BICKENDORF 1998, p. 52–63; see also GOLDBERG 1988, p. 89, 104–106.
- 47 BALDINUCCI 1687, p. 9: »Gli occhi, e non gli orecchi deon chimarsi a consiglio per dar giudizio delle buone pitture.«
- 48 On the importance attributed by Baldinucci to artistic practice, see STRUHAL 2018.
- 49 On the first page of his *Lettera a Vincenzo Capponi*, Baldinucci claims that he will talk about questions related to painting »le quali quantunque non vadano attorno ne' volume degli Scrittori, non è per questo, che non meritino d'esser proposte, e trattate per esser poi da ogn'altro, fuori che da me, decise, e terminate«. See BALDINUCCI 1687, p. 3.
- 50 For the parallels with Giulio Mancini's concept of the *perito* in the *Considerazioni appartenenti alla Pittura*, see BICKENDORF 1998, p. 35–48; SPEAR 2002. On Mancini's conceptualization of the *perito*, see also SPARTI 2008. On Mancini in general, see GAGE 2016.
- 51 MANCINI/MARUCCHI 1956/57, vol. 1, p. 5–7.
- 52 BICKENDORF 1998, p. 35–48.

- 53 MANCINI/MARUCCHI 1956/57, vol. 1, p. 6: »imitatione delle cose che si ritrovano in questo mondo«.
- 54 Ibid., p. 7.
- 55 Ibid., p. 6.
- 56 For this essential category, see KOSENINA 1996. For its importance in the discourse of early modern natural philosophy, see GAUVIN 2011.
- 57 LIZARDO 2012, p. 1.
- 58 KOSENINA 1996, col. 1272.
- 59 MANCINI/MARUCCHI 1956/57, vol. 1, p. 8.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 BALDINUCCI 1687, p. 5: »L’Abito è una qualità molto ferma, che non si perde, o si muta senza difficoltà.«
- 62 Ibid., p. 6.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 YOUNG 2017.
- 65 Ibid., p. 83.
- 66 GAUVIN 2011, p. 316.
- 67 BALDINUCCI 1687, p. 7.
- 68 Ibid., p. 7f.
- 69 Ibid., p. 8.
- 70 Ibid., p. 9.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 The terms »epistemic virtue«, »objective« and »trained judgment« derive from DASTON/GALISON 2010.
- 73 BALDINUCCI/RANALLI 1974, vol. 4, p. 192f.
- 74 DASTON 2011, p. 81–113. For the tradition of biographical exemplarity, see BURKE 2011.
- 75 DASTON 2013, p. 657–677.

Bibliography

- BALDINUCCI 1681: Filippo Baldinucci, *Vocabolario Toscano dell’Arte del Disegno*, Florence 1681.
- BALDINUCCI 1687: Filippo Baldinucci, *Lettera di Filippo Baldinucci Fiorentino, accademico della Crusca, nella quale risponde ad alcuni quesiti in materie di Pittura*, Florence 1687.
- BALDINUCCI/RANALLI 1974: Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie di Giovanni da San Giovanni*, in: Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de’ Professori del Disegno*, vol. 4, ed. Ferdinando Ranalli, Florence 1974, p. 204–210.
- BÄTSCHMANN 2014: Oskar Bätschmann, *Félibiens Dictionnaire von 1676 und Baldinuccis Vocabolario von 1681*, in: *Begrifflichkeit, Konzepte, Definitionen. Schreiben über*

- Kunst und ihre Medien, eds. Elisabeth Oy-Marra, Ulrike von Bernstorff and Henry Keazor, Wiesbaden 2014, p. 21–46.
- BAROCCHI 1975: Paola Barocchi, *Nota Critica*, in: Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei Professori del Disegno da Cimabue in qua*, vol. 6 (Appendice), ed. Paola Barocchi and Ferdinando Ranalli, Florence 1975, p. 9–66.
- BEHRMANN 2014: Carolin Behrmann (ed.), *Autopsia: Blut- und Augenzeugen. Extreme Bilder des christlichen Martyriums*, Paderborn/München 2014.
- BELL/WILLETTE 2002: Janis Bell and Thomas Willette (eds.), *Art History in the Age of Bellori. Scholarship and Cultural Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*, Cambridge 2002.
- BELLORI/OY-MARRA/WEDDINGEN/BRUG 2018–2023: Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni / Die Lebensbeschreibungen der modernen Maler, Bildhauer und Architekten*, eds. Elisabeth Oy-Marra, Tristan Weddingen and Anja Brug, Göttingen 2018–2023.
- BERETTA 2000: Marco Beretta, *At the Source of Western Science: The Organization of Experimentalism at the Accademia del Cimento (1657–1667)*, in: *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 54, 2000, p. 131–151.
- BICKENDORF 1998: Gabriele Bickendorf, *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1998.
- BOREA 2000: Evelina Borea (ed.), *L'idea del bello: Viaggio per Roma nel Seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori*, Rome 2000.
- BOSCHIERO 2007: Luciano Boschiero, *Experiment and Natural Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Tuscany*, Dordrecht 2007.
- BREDEKAMP 2009: Horst Bredekamp, *Galilei der Künstler: der Mond, die Sonne, die Hand*, Berlin 2009.
- BURKE 2011: Peter Burke, *Exemplarity and Anti-Exemplarity in Early Modern Europe*, in: *The Western Time of Ancient History: Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri, Cambridge 2011, p. 48–59.
- CAMEROTA 2007: Filippo Camerota, *Il contributo di Galileo alla matematizzazione delle arti*, in: *Galilaeana. Journal of Galileian Studies* 4, 2007, p. 79–103.
- COCHRANE 1961: Eric Cochrane, *Tradition and Enlightenment in the Tuscan Academies, 1690–1800*, Chicago 1961.
- COCHRANE 1973: Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800. A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes*, Chicago 1973.

- CONTICELLI/GENNAIOLI/SFRAMELI 2017: Valentina Conticelli, Riccardo Gennaioli and Maria Sframeli (eds.), Leopoldo de' Medici. Principe dei collezionisti, exh. cat. Florence, Livorno 2017.
- CROPPER 2013: Elizabeth Cropper, Malvasia and Vasari: Emilian and Tuscan Histories of Art, in: Bologna – Cultural Crossroads from the Medieval to the Baroque. Recent Anglo-American Scholarship, eds. Gian Mario Anselmi, Angela De Benedictis and Nicholas Terpstra, Bologna 2013, p. 97–105.
- DASTON 2011: Lorraine Daston, *Histories of Scientific Observation*, Chicago 2011.
- DASTON 2013: Lorraine Daston, *Observation and Enlightenment*, in: *Scholars in Action. The Practice of Knowledge and the Figure of the Savant in the 18th Century*, eds. André Holenstein, Hubert Steinke and Martin Stuber, Leiden/Boston 2013, vol. 2, p. 657–677.
- DASTON/GALISON 2010: Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, Cambridge 2010.
- DIDEROT 1751: Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les Sourds et les Muets, à l'usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent*, Paris 1751.
- FÉLIBIEN 1676: André Félibien, *Des Principes de l'Architecture, Sculpture et Peinture*, Paris 1676.
- FRASCARELLI 2016: Dalma Frascarelli (ed.), *L'Altro Seicento. Arte a Roma tra Eterodossia, Libertinismo e Scienza*, Rome 2016.
- GAGE 2016: Frances Gage, *Painting as Medicine in Early Modern Rome: Giulio Mancini and the Efficacy of Art*, University Park (Pennsylvania) 2016.
- GALLUZZI 2001: Paolo Galluzzi (ed.), *Scienziati a Corte. L'arte della sperimentazione nell'Accademia Galileiana del Cimento (1657–1667)*, Livorno 2001.
- GAUVIN 2011: Jean-François Gauvin, *Instruments of Knowledge*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Desmond M. Clarke and Catherine Wilson, Oxford 2011, p. 315–337.
- GOLDBERG 1988: Edward L. Goldberg, *After Vasari. History, Art and Patronage in Late Medici Florence*, Princeton 1988.
- KEMMANN 1996: A. Kemmann, *Evidentia, Evidenz*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 3, ed. Gert Ueding, Tübingen 1996, cols. 33–47.
- KOSENINA 1996: A. Kosenina, *Habitus*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 3, ed. Gert Ueding, Tübingen 1996, cols. 1272–1277.
- LAZZERI 1983: Alessandro Lazzeri, *Intellettuai e consenso nella Toscana del Seicento. L'academia degli Apatisti*, Milan 1983.
- LEINKAUF 2017: Thomas Leinkauf, *Grundriss Philosophie des Humanismus und der Renaissance (1350–1600)*, 2 vols., Hamburg 2017.

- LICOPPE 1994: Christian Licoppe, The Crystallization of a New Narrative Form in Experimental Reports (1660–1690). The Experimental Evidence as a Transaction between Philosophical Knowledge and Aristocratic Power, in: *Science in Context* 7, 1994, p. 205–244.
- LIZARDO 2012: Omar Lizardo, *Habitus*. Classical Sources of the Concept, January 7, 2012 [Vortragsmanuskript]: <https://www.academia.edu/16199453/Habitus>.
- MAGALOTTI 1667: Lorenzo Magalotti, *Saggi di naturali esperienze*, Florence 1667.
- MAGUREANU 2011: Ioana Magureanu, Baccio del Bianco and the cultural politics of the Medici Court, in: *Revue roumaine d'histoire de l'art* 48, 2011, p. 13–26.
- MALVASIA 1686: Cesare Malvasia, *Le Pitture di Bologna*, Bologna 1686.
- MANCINI/MARUCCHI 1956/57: Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*, ed. Adriana Marucchi, 2 vols., Rome 1956/57.
- PAGDEN 1993: Anthony Pagden, *Encounters with the New World*, New Haven/London 1993.
- PERINI 1988: Giovanna Perini, Carlo Cesare Malvasia's Florentine Letters: Insights into Conflicting Trends in Seventeenth-Century Italian Art Historiography, in: *The Art Bulletin* 70, 1988, p. 273–299.
- PRAZ 1964: Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, Rome 1964.
- RAIMONDI 1990: Ezio Raimondi, *La dissimulazione romanzesca*, Bologna 1990.
- ROSSI 2007: Massimiliano Rossi, La Crusca nell'occhio. L'Empoli tra Galileo e Michelangelo il Giovane, in: *Galilaeana* 4, 2007, p. 189–209.
- SHAPIN/SCHAFFER 1985: Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-pump*, Princeton 1985.
- SMITH 2006: Pamela Smith, Art, Science, and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe, in: *Isis* 97, 2006, p. 83–100.
- SOHM 2001: Phillip Sohm, *Style in the Art Theory of Early Modern Italy*, Cambridge 2001.
- SPARTI 2008: Donatella Livia Sparti, Novità su Giulio Mancini: Medicina, arte e presunta ›Connoisseurship‹, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 52, 2008, p. 53–72.
- SPEAR 2002: Richard Spear, »Di sua mano«, in: *The Ancient Art of Emulation. Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity*, Ann Arbor (Michigan) 2002, p. 79–98.
- STRUHAL 2016: Eva Struhal, Filippo Baldinucci's Novità: The Notizie de' Professori del Disegno and Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*, in: *Vasari als Paradigma*, eds. Fabian Jonietz and Alessandro Nova, Venice 2016, p. 193–203.

- STRUHAL 2018: Eva Struhal, Documenting the Language of Artistic Practice: Filippo Baldinucci's Vocabolario Toscano dell'Arte del Disegno, in: *Lexicographie artistique*, ed. Michèle-Caroline Heck, Montpellier 2018, p. 213–227.
- TOSI 1999: Alessandro Tosi, ›Studietti‹ e ›Gallerie‹ nella Toscana di Redi, in: Francesco Redi, un protagonista della scienza moderna. Documenti, esperimenti, immagini, eds. Walter Bernardi and Luigi Guerrini, Florence 1999, p. 317–320.
- WIMBÖCK/LEONHARD/FRIEDRICH 2007: Gabriele Wimböck, Karin Leonhard and Markus Friedrich (eds.), *Evidentia. Reichweiten visueller Wahrnehmung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 2007.
- YOUNG 2017: Mark Thomas Young, Nature as Spectacle: Experience and Empiricism in Early Modern Experimental Practice, in: *Centaurus* 59, 2017, p. 72–96.