

needy groups also made charitable donations to the Misericordia to benefit their own souls (in particular, I examined the city's wine porters and domestic servants, and found members of each group alternately receiving alms from the Misericordia and giving charitable donations or bequests to the association). Some of these individuals also became members of the confraternity. The experience of paupers within the confraternity as clients, members, and donors, should serve as a reminder that the relationship between medieval confraternities and the poor was never entirely one-way. Instead, the poor, like other citizens, treated the Misericordia as both a social and a pious organization.

Finally, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Misericordia, a stable institution in a politically unstable city, established a close rapport with local civic authorities. Through this connection the confraternity became the charitable arm of the government, providing, with the support of civic officials, alms to the poor. The civic government's support for the confraternity encompassed cash donations, tax privileges, and the simplification of legal procedures in the company's favour. The connection between the Misericordia and local civic officials once again illustrates the nature of civic piety in the Middle Ages, as both government and pious organizations sought the same ends—security and salvation for all—through their involvement in local issues such as assistance for the poor.

Medieval confraternities such as the Misericordia provide us with essential information about lay people's pious and social lives. The community outreach in which the Misericordia engaged, the structural divisions of its membership, and its cultivation of close ties with local governments all formed the foundation of civic piety in the later Middle Ages. Civic piety articulated through groups such as the Misericordia reflected the urban laity's twin commitments to social and pious principles, and, therefore, the interdependence of secular and spiritual spheres within medieval society.

\* \* \*

Dehmer, Andrea. *Painted Processional Banners of Religious Lay Confraternities in Northern and Central Italy from their Beginnings Until the Era of Counter-Reformation*. M.A. Thesis, University of Regensburg, Germany.

The thesis surveys for the first time the surviving art works on canvas called *gonfaloni* produced in Northern Italy between the late Middle Ages and the end of the Renaissance. Commissioned mostly by lay confraternities, their functional, iconographical and technical analysis as well as their documentary integration in church and art historical contexts, will serve two significant purposes: (1) to illustrate the devotions and intentions of these companies who distinguished, represented, and even identified themselves with their signs; (2) to point out the considerable role played by the *gonfaloni* in the rapid spread of some religious motives and especially of painting on canvas in Italy.

The reception of *gonfaloni*-display in literature and art, a hitherto almost absolutely neglected field in art history, is examined in a separate chapter. The

catalogue of traceable gonfaloni-painting from c. 1260 to c. 1570 provides a fundamental starting point for further exploration of this aspect of Italian and European art.

\* \* \*

Earenfight, Phillip J. *The Residence and Loggia della Misericordia ("Il Bigallo")*: *Art and Architecture of Confraternal Piety, Charity, and Virtue in Late Medieval Florence*. Ph.D. thesis, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 1999. Supervisor, Professor Sarah Blake McHam.

This dissertation examines the art and architecture of the residence and loggia of the Compagnia di Santa Maria della Misericordia in Florence. The Misericordia was one of largest charitable confraternities in late medieval Florence. It was located in the physical and symbolic centre of the city, the Piazza San Giovanni, and stood near the Baptistry, Campanile, and Duomo. At this highly prestigious location the confraternity provided services to the city's needy and served as a public symbol of Florentine charity and civic virtue.

The dissertation focuses on a series of projects commissioned by the Misericordia from 1321, when it moved to the Piazza San Giovanni, to 1524, when it merged with the Compagnia di Santa Maria del Bigallo (by which name the site is currently known). It is a study of artistic patronage and how a lay pious institution defined its charitable mission through its art and architecture during a period of tremendous urban development, intense lay piety, horrific plagues, and the rise of Renaissance humanism.

Five major projects are discussed: 1) the acquisition of property on the Piazza San Giovanni; 2) the painting of a fresco representing an *Allegory of Divine Misericordia*; 3) the expansion of the Misericordia's residence through the acquisition of neighbouring property and the subsequent design, construction, and decoration of a new loggia and oratory; 4) the painting of a fresco cycle representing the life of Tobit, the confraternity's patron saint; and 5) the painting of a fresco representing *Members of the Misericordia Uniting Foundlings with Natural and Adoptive Parents*.

This study is the first to consider these projects together as a vehicle for the understanding of the confraternity and how it defined its position in the complex urban and social fabric of Trecento Florence. Analysis of these projects demonstrates that over the course of the Trecento, the Misericordia identified its pious mission as a crucial feature in the city's religious and civic well-being. Moreover, it reveals that the confraternity commissioned two of the earliest surviving views of the city, promoted the idea of Florence as the New Jerusalem, and identified itself as the foremost symbol of Florentine charity.