

Confraternite, chiesa e società. Ed. Liana Bertoldi Lenoci. Fasano: Schena Editore, 1994. 889 pp., ill.

This collection of essays on confraternities, the Church, and society constitutes a major component of the 1994 confraternities project ("Progetto 94") undertaken by the Centro Ricerche di Storia Religiosa in Puglia. Unlike the exhibition catalogue on confraternities and religious art in Puglia (see above), this volume reaches far beyond the geographical boundaries of the region and of Italy, to bring together scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. Confraternities from across Italy (Calabria, Puglia, Florence, Bologna, Rome, Modena, Genoa, Venice etc.) are examined, along with those in France, Spain, Germany and early colonial Brazil. The time frame ranges from the fourteenth century to the present, with an emphasis on the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

The rich geographical and temporal scope of the collection is intensified when the multiplicity of scholarly approaches is taken into consideration. The disciplines included range from history to historiography, art history, architecture, archaeology, music and theatre. The very fact that confraternity studies lends itself so readily to so many approaches indicates the thoroughly social nature of these organizations, and their important role in both the sacred and profane aspects of community life.

Lenoci's succinct introduction explains that the book is drawn from papers submitted and accepted for an international conference which was subsequently cancelled due to lack of sufficient funding. A redirection of extant funds, however, allowed for the publication of the "proceedings." As a result, a comprehensive yet eclectic collection of essays was compiled that reflects the diversity of place, time, and approach in confraternity studies. The contents of the volume, which ought to find a place in all major library shelves, are listed below in the rubric "Publications Received" (p. 41-42).

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Italian Altarpieces 1250-1550. Function and Design. Eds. Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. viii, 296 pp., ill.

This collection of eight essays is a result of a conference held in 1988 at Villa I Tatti in Florence. The range of approaches represented is wide, including discussions of format, function, patronage, original setting and reception.

Julian Gardner writes on altar decoration and its relationship to church legislation. Although badly in need of judicious editing, his essay provides stimulating insights into the origins of the altarpiece and the reasons underlying the choice of saints depicted in some early examples.

The essays by Gaudenz Freuler and Max Seidel on Sienese Quattrocento painting are of particular interest to those involved in confraternal studies. Freuler describes how the prestigious Compagnia della Vergine, motivated by civic pride, commissioned an altarpiece to promote the speedy canonization of San Bernardino. In addition, prompted by the fact that the founder of the Gesuati had been a member of the Compagnia, the confraternity commissioned an altarpiece for the Sienese church of this order, thus cementing in the public consciousness an important association. Seidel also argues that altarpieces were powerful agents of social expression. He describes how the German artisans' confraternity of Santa Barbara obtained and decorated an important chapel in San Domenico in Siena. To express their social status the confraternity required that the altarpiece should be taller than and at least as lavish as that in the adjacent chapel belonging to a prominent Sienese family.

Peter Humfrey, in his essay on changing formats in Venetian altarpieces, maintains that the new Renaissance architectural style was a significant factor in promoting the shift from the polyptych to the *pala* format in altarpiece design. His hypothesis is based on Christa Gardner von Teuffel's study of the *pala* in Florence, but the Venetian evidence does not, however, conform closely to this model, casting the author's conclusion into doubt. Also discussing morphology is the essay by Alessandro Nova, in which the author demonstrates that, paralleling the Northern European situation, movable shutters and curtains often covered sixteenth-century Lombard altarpieces.

The essays by Joanna Cannon and Patricia Rubin deal with the relative contribution of artist and patron to the final form of the altarpiece. Cannon has argued in her earlier work that there was a certain formal and iconographic coherence amongst polyptychs produced for the Dominicans in Trecento Tuscany. In this essay she groups works around the other mendicant orders and, finding a similar coherence, argues convincingly that the form and subject matter of early Sienese polyptychs developed at least partially in response to the concerns of patrons. Patricia Rubin charts the changing expectations of patrons and artists in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Tuscany. In the fifteenth century, she contends, the demands of the patron were paramount; they commissioned altarpieces that were only secondarily works of artistry. In the sixteenth century, by contrast, the importance of the artist had increased so greatly

that the object's status as a work of art was foremost. The argument, however, is based on the use of a few exceptional Florentine examples and does not furnish sufficient evidence for a generalization. Most sixteenth-century commissions were still directed by the patron.

The final essay, by Michelangelo Muraro, adds to our understanding of the business context of altarpiece production. Drawing on the extensive records left by the Bassano workshop, Muraro retraces in great detail the series of steps followed in the production of Bassano altarpieces.

Marred only by the poor quality of the reproductions, this book is a valuable addition to the steadily growing number of scholarly works on the altarpiece in early modern Europe.

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Laude. Medieval Italian Spiritual Songs. Musicians of the Early Music Institute. Thomas Binkley, Director. Early Music Institute, Indiana University School of Music, 1991. Focus 912.

We should all give serious thought to adding this excellent compact disc to our libraries for it brings to life spiritual songs belonging to the lauda repertoire which was of integral importance to Italian confraternities and, more generally, to Italian society. The four laude on this recording are taken from two manuscripts: *Laude novella* to the Virgin Mary and the Passion lauda *Plangiamo quel crudel basciare* from the thirteenth-century laudario, Cortona, Biblioteca del Comune, MS.91; the Easter lauda *Laudate la surrectione* and *Peccatrice nominata* to Mary Magdalene from the early fourteenth-century laudario, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. II I 122. Each is realized with imagination by the musicians of the Early Music Institute, under the expert direction of Thomas Binkley.

With no more than the text and its melody in early notation, and guided by general notions as to appropriate performance practice, the ensemble has created inspired performances ranging in mood from the exuberant *Laude novella*, to the sorrowful *Plangiamo quel crudel basciare*, the lyrical *Laudate la surrectione*, and the ultimately triumphant *Peccatrice nominata*. Through careful declamation and contrast, not only of solo and choral singing, but also of song and speech, the sense of the texts is ably communicated. Further, the variety of techniques used