

Theses Completed (Abstracts)

Earenfight, Phillip Joseph. *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, The State University of New Jersey, October 1999. Supervisor: Sarah Blake McHam.

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

The research presented here focuses on a series of projects commissioned by the Misericordia from its move to Piazza San Giovanni in 1321 to its merger in 1425 with another confraternity, the Compagnia di Santa Maria del Bigallo (by which the site is known today). It is a study of artistic patronage, specifically 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.

The dissertation addresses five major topics: (1) the acquisition of property on the Piazza San Giovanni; (2) 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) a fresco cycle representing the life of Tobit, the confraternity's patron saint; and (5) a fresco representing *Members of the Misericordia Uniting Foundlings with Natural and Adoptive Parents*.

This study is the first to draw together these projects and interpret them as a means to understand the confraternity and how it defined its place 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 Florence as the New Jerusalem, and identified itself as the foremost institution of Florentine charity and symbol of that virtue in the city.