

Il Conservatorio del Baraccano. La storia e i restauri. Eds. Paola Foschi and Francisco Giordano. Bologna: Costa Editore, 2002. 127 pp., colour illustrations.

This collection of seven essays gives an overview of the Conservatorio del Baraccano, contextualizing the confraternity structure within Bologna's history from the Quattrocento to the present day, and detailing the recent restoration of the complex.

The first essay in the collection, by Paola Foschi, outlines the foundation of the conservatory and orphanage. Foschi notes that the Baraccano originally served to enshrine an image of the Madonna and Child that was painted on a tower of the city walls. This image was credited with several miracles starting in 1402, and at least two of the Bentivoglio family's military successes were attributed to it. Giovanni Bentivoglio had a small shrine erected on the site in 1402, and a confraternity, known as la Campagnia del Baraccano, was formed to worship the Madonna in 1403. Through the patronage of the confraternity, and especially the Bentivoglio family, the conservatory expanded from a small chapel into a large complex, and, in 1528, opened an orphanage for girls.

Federica Malaguti adds to Foschi's discussion of the orphanage in her essay "La pittura murale nell'Oratorio delle 'putte'". Malaguti asserts that the Marian cycle in the oratory was intended to evoke devotion from the young female orphans of the Baraccano. Scenes such as the *Annunciation* may be linked to the Marian imagery that became popular after Pope Pius V issued a bull granting indulgences for meditating on the Mysteries.

In addition to the Marian imagery, Malaguti discusses three scenes in the oratory attributed to Bagnacavallo. She notes that if these scenes of the Passion are truly by Bagnacavallo's hand, as early sources contend, they comprise an important chapter in his little-known activities as a fresco artist.

While the essays by Foschi, Malaguti and Andrea Santucci discuss aspects of the conservatory's history and decoration in the Quattro and Cinquecenti, many of the essays in the collection focus on more recent events. For example, Francisco Giordano's essay "Il Baraccano del 1865" details renovations on the conservatory in the nineteenth century. There is also an emphasis on the recent restoration of the conservatory, which is explicitly detailed in two essays.

Despite this more modern emphasis, several of the essays in this volume offer an overview of the Baraccano's early decoration and history at an opportune time, when confraternities and their relation to the visual arts have started to receive heightened attention. Scholars interested in this area will benefit from the essays by Foschi, Malaguti and Santucci, and from the wealth of colour illustrations contained in the volume. The collection offers a concise introduction to the conservatory and its imagery, and is thus a valuable addition to confraternity scholarship.

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