

*Devozione e carità. Il patrimonio artistico delle istituzioni pubbliche di assistenza e beneficenza di Cremona.* Ed. Lia Bellingeri. Annali della Biblioteca statale e libreria civica di Cremona. Cremona: Edizioni Linograf, 2001. 349 pp. Euro 20,66.

This volume emanates from an invitation by the editor, Lia Bellingeri, to a few fellow curators, restorers and historians to examine first-hand some of the works of art housed in the headquarters of the Istituto Generale Elemosiniere in Cremona, a city in northern Italy. The Istituto was created as a result of the eighteenth-century trend to centralize social assistance into the hands of the public administration. These efforts left their suppressive mark not only on social aid, but also on the patronage of the Cremonese art community which, as the contributors to the text are quick to point out, had been greatly supported and fostered by the city's confraternities from as far back as the Middle Ages. When documenting, restoring and preserving the many works found in the Istituto and in other buildings and churches in Cremona, the contributors found themselves unveiling a history that would inextricably link the development of the artistic community in Cremona with commissions from organizations such as the Consorzio della Donna and the Consorzio di Sant'Omobono, which sought these works in order to decorate their buildings.

The editor provides an introduction to the confraternities and the institutions of the city, to the buildings that housed them, and to the works commissioned by, and bequeathed to, these institutions. The importance of the activities of daily life in this book's perspective is exemplified by the inclusion of the account of functional changes, in addition to that of decorative alterations, to the building erected in 1697 to house the Consorzio della Donna.

In her contribution to the volume, Mariella Morandi explores the potential impact of sources such as accounting records on the study of confraternities. It is in fact thanks to such sources that Morandi was able to attribute the first cycle of Sant'Omobono to Bartolomeo Bersani, on the basis of the payment record she discovered in the Consorzio's financial records. No record of payment can be found for the second cycle, although one assumes the work was commissioned by a private benefactor as a demonstration of his faith and support.

Thirty-one works from the mid fifteenth to the early eighteenth century are profiled in the catalogue section. They provide information on the composition of each work, the medium, and the restorations carried out to date. The discussions, as exemplified by those detailing the two previously unpublished works possibly attributable to the Genoese painter Andrea Carlone and to Stefano Lambri of Cremona, provide a concise insights into various aspects of Cremonese society, diplomacy, and civic life that may have contributed to the commission or to the acquisition of the work by a confraternity.

The final section presents the reader with a photo inventory of 88 works—mostly seventeenth-century paintings—not previously mentioned in the book. Almost all are of uncertain authorship and for many of these works no previous published documentation has been found. This section leaves the reader curious for further information.

For example, one would like to know more about a painting possibly attributed to a Scandinavian artist—the work's singularity might tell an interesting story about the international interests of Cremonese confraternities or of their benefactors.

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Farnhill, Ken. *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c. 1470–1550*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press / Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Inc., 2001. ix, 237 pp. ISBN 1-903153-05-0 \$90.

In an impressive contribution to the study of confraternities, Ken Farnhill's *Guilds and the Parish Community in Medieval East Anglia, c. 1470–1550* offers fresh perspectives on guilds in their local and parochial settings in England. In a regional study that spans the late medieval-early modern divide, Farnhill contends that guilds enjoyed a general popularity in late medieval English market towns and villages on the eve of the Henrician Reforms and that these fraternities existed independently from, yet in symbiotic relation to, the local parish. Arguing that guilds were not simply religious organizations, but were social, economic and political entities as well, he notes that it is precisely because of these broader interrelationships that the guilds were not in competition with, nor were subordinate to, the parish church, and were able to make significant contributions to the parish community at large. Farnhill concludes by arguing that while the politically-driven religious reforms of Henry VIII and Edward VI were largely responsible for the demise of guilds, various economic and social factors left them in a vulnerable position that made their survival doubtful in any case.

Written as a doctoral dissertation for the University of Cambridge, *Guilds and the Parish Community* is a thoroughly researched response to several lively academic controversies. In particular, Farnhill challenges Beat Kumin's thesis that fraternal organizations were subordinated to the office of the churchwarden in the parish administrative structure. He also engages the broader debates on the impact of the Reformation at the local level and the nature and *raison d'être* of guild formation. As Farnhill sees it, guilds were primarily religious and charitable organizations that responded to local social, political and economic needs, but the tendency of current Reformation historians to dismiss their multifaceted character in favor of their religious objectives “has threatened to swamp a proper sense of their function and flexibility” (171).

It is this sense of function and flexibility that Farnhill seeks to recreate as he delves into his East Anglian sources. *Guilds and the Parish Community* relies on sources similar to those of other regional guild studies: guild accounts, membership lists, bede rolls, churchwarden accounts, wills, guild returns, chantry certificates, lay subsidy lists and manorial records. He purposefully concentrates his study on the market towns and villages of Norfolk and Suffolk, observing that the preponderance