

Thesis Completed

Alana O'Brien. "San Filippo Benizi, 'Honour of the Servi and Florence': His Cycle and Cult at SS. Annunziata, c. 1475–1671." Doctoral Dissertation, LaTrobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 2001. Director: Robert Gaston.

This thesis examines the fresco cycle depicting the life and miracles of San Filippo Benizi painted by Cosimo Rosselli (c. 1475) and Andrea del Sarto (1509–10) in the forecourt of the Servite church of the SS. Annunziata, Florence. It focuses on how this cycle was perceived and interpreted by its beholders at particular stages in its history. The thesis explores the social and liturgical functions of the cycle and identifies who its potential spectators were. In contrast to previous studies, the cycle's iconography is reinterpreted through careful consideration of the *Vitae Sancti Philippi* that pre-dated the cycle or were contemporary with it. Particular attention is paid to the liturgical activity connected with Filippo Benizi's cult at the SS. Annunziata and, by implication, with the cycle.

A reconstruction of the physical, social, liturgical and para-liturgical environment of the frescos serves to elucidate who went to SS. Annunziata and why. Furthermore, it helps to clarify what factors made people more responsive to Filippo Benizi's cult and thus more likely to engage with the cycle. Particular emphasis is given to evidence gleaned from the inquisitorial hearing for the canonization of Filippo Benizi held in 1619–21, which throws unexpected light on the issue of spectator response to the frescos.

The thesis also includes an investigation of the cult of San Sebastiano at the SS. Annunziata and its connection with Filippo Benizi's cult. This elucidates why a cycle dedicated to the Roman martyr was planned to appear opposite the Benizi cycle. The connections between Filippo Benizi and St Sebastian were most prominent in the statutes of the confraternity of San Sebastiano. The confraternity met in the SS. Annunziata and claimed to be the continuation of a thirteenth century Marian *laudese* confraternity thought to have been founded by Filippo Benizi. In the fifteenth century, the Servites attempted to promote Filippo Benizi's cult through this confraternity (subsequently re-dedicated to San Sebastiano), but with little success. Nevertheless, the compagnia di San Sebastiano and other confraternities were drawn into the celebration of various devotional cults at the SS. Annunziata, including that of Filippo Benizi.