

Carrara, Francesca, Ludovica Sebreghondi, Ulisse Tramonti. *Gli istituti di beneficenza a Firenze. Storia e architettura*. Saggi e documenti della storia dell'architettura 33. Firenze: Alinea, 1999. 191 pp., b/w and colour illustrations ISBN 88-8125-311-9. L. 40,000.

This book investigates the history of charitable institutions in Florence, following up and building on an homonymous exhibition organised in that city by the three authors in April and May of 1998.

In the introductory chapter, the authors sketch a brief overview, from medieval to contemporary times, of the development of these *istituti*, variously founded by religious orders, confraternities, and individuals, and they emphasise the close relationship between their evolution and the social, economic, religious, architectural, and urban history of Florence. Each of the ten essays that follows is devoted to a single institution. The focus throughout is on the architecture of the buildings that housed the institutions and on the paintings, sculpture, furnishings, and decorative materials collected therein. The authors anchor their account of the architectural and artistic fortunes of these buildings to a reconstruction of the institutional history of each organisation.

Ulisse Tramonti studies the Bigallo, a lay association of medieval origin, and the celebrated Istituto degli Innocenti. Francesca Carrara and Ludovica Sebreghondi examine the Pia Casa di Lavoro di Montedomini, which over the centuries has served variously as hospital, convent, and poorhouse. Several essays are devoted to educational institutions. Tramonti treats the Istituto San Silvestro, which was founded in 1865 to house and educate poor girls. Carrara examines the Istituto Demidoff, established in 1828 as an elementary school for poor children, the Pia Casa di Rifugio di Sant'Ambrogio, founded in the nineteenth century for *giovani traviate* on the premises of a Benedictine convent suppressed by the French in 1808, and the Pio Istituto de' Bardi, another nineteenth-century institution, set up as technical school; with Sebreghondi she looks at the Educatorio della SS. Concezione di Fuligno, until 1973 a school for poor girls.

Two essays by Sebreghondi will be of particular interest to scholars of confraternities. In the first, she studies the architectural complex known today as the Istituto di Santa Agnese dell'Opera Pia del Bigallo. Various associations operated on these premises, including the Compagnia or "Buca" di San Paolo, a confraternity, founded in 1434, which counted Lorenzo de' Medici among its members. In the second, she considers another confraternity, the Congregazione di San Francesco della Dottrina Cristiana, which was established around the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Blessed Ippolito Galantini to promote religious instruction.

The essays are furnished with copious and detailed notes which attest to the original archival research carried out by the authors. The volume includes a wealth of illustrations and architectural plans, and to each essay are appended the *schede*, all by Sebreghondi, that accompanied the material shown in the original exhibition, much of which is reproduced here in photographs. The book also includes a bibliography, an index of names, and 15 pages of colour plates.

This volume is an important introduction to the study of Florentine charitable institutions and a useful contribution to scholarship on the religious, artistic, and social history of the city.

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Domínguez León, José. *La sociedad sevillana en la época isabelina. Una visión a través de la religiosidad (1833–1868)*. Córdoba: Publicaciones obra social y cultural cajasur, 1999. 588 pp. ISBN 84-7959-271-0.

The end of absolute monarchy in 1834 and the triumph of liberalism began a period of political, social, and economic change in Spain that transformed the country. The transition from the absolutist certainties of the past to a society dominated by an emerging bourgeoisie was conflictive and unsettling. Domínguez León provides a comprehensive study of this process in Seville through a detailed and clear analysis of its institutions, its society, especially the family and its religious life in a time of gradual secularization. There is little, however, on the *hermandades* and *cofradías* once so numerous in the city during absolute monarchy when religion and public life were more deeply intertwined than in nineteenth-century liberal Spain. Spanish liberals had little use for brotherhoods and confraternities embodying the class distinctions of the Old Regime and dependent for their survival on endowments of urban and rural property. In 1841, the government of General Espartero struck the final blow by ordering the sale of property of *hermandades* and *cofradías* for the benefit of the public treasury. Some survived, of course, but as associations of private individuals rather than as public and religious corporations ingrained in the fabric of traditional, hierarchical society.

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Fassina, Giuseppe. *Fraternità monzese tra medioevo ed epoca contemporanea*. Monza: Rotari Club Monza Est e Monda Nord/Società di Studi Monzesi, 1999. 256 pp. ill.; no price, no ISBN

The city of Monza, once part of the Duchy of Milan, is not only rich in history and culture, but also of interest to scholars working on lay religious movements. Giuseppe Fassina's study on the confraternities of Monza from the Middle Ages to the present offers an insight into the city and its community by tracing the origins of several of its confraternities and recounting the religious practices in use not only within its confraternities but also within Monzese society.