

*Beyond the Text: Franciscan Art and the Construction of Religion.* Edited by Xavier Seubert and Oleg Bychkov. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2013. Pp. vii + 252. \$65.

This text represents perhaps the most creative of a series of studies sponsored by the Franciscan Institute's May Bonfils Stanton Memorial Fund. The projects benefiting from this endowment gather scholars around a Franciscan theme, meet in Denver to discuss and design the proposed volume, and then work together as a team. The resulting volumes have been uneven, as these types of projects tend to be, but it is clear that this volume benefitted from a unique collaborative effort.

William Cook's essay—unfortunately not accompanied by any reproductions—examines early images of St. Francis. Cook's discussion of the importance of art both in the early Franciscan community and in Francis's own life serves as a scholarly and contemplative introduction to the volume. It begins with a text that unites both careful scholarship and lived experience. Marilyn Aronberb Lavin studies Bellini's painting of Francis's stigmata in the Frick Collection. The painting's setting is the island of San Francesco del Deserto five kilometers northeast across the lagoon from Venice. Even though the stigmata was historically set on Mt. La Verna, Bellini's depiction offers the viewer an opportunity to ponder Francis's little-noted excursion to this island. Theresa Flanigan's essay on the Church of San Marco in Florence offers an interesting and, again, little-pondered reflection on ocular prohibitions and the construction of sacred space. Rather than tempt the Dominican friars with "ever-problematic feminine guiles," the architecture of San Marco was designed to focus the friars' gaze on spiritual mysteries. Although a worthy essay, it is a bit odd to find this Dominican study in an otherwise Franciscan volume.

Local studies in Franciscan history are often valuable in that they pinpoint particular trends in regional piety. William Barcham's article concerning the Man of Sorrows paintings in fifteenth-century Padua is a case in point. The use of iconography not only as distinguishing treasures in local churches but also as emotion-laden presences appearing in annual street processions is an interesting study in Renaissance ecclesial culture. Art historians who wish to introduce students to the Giotto cycle in the upper church of San Francesco in Assisi may wish to consult Beth Mulvaney's essay on the subject. M.'s readable work focuses on the theological dynamism between the frescos, offering plenty of material for further development during lecture.

One of the most delightful essays in the volume is David Flood's on miniatures illustrating Angelo Clareno's *A History of the Seven Tribulations* (1323–26). Having never seen these miniatures before, I found them wonderfully fascinating and, following Flood's lead, appreciated the distinction between the "high" art coming out of Santa Croce in Florence and the primitive honesty of these "spiritual" miniatures. There was something about this art that made the story of Clareno's early struggling friars even more poignant. David Haack's essay studies the history of the habit in the early paintings of St. Francis. Unfortunately some of the illustrations in this essay are poorly produced. Proceeding to the New World, Cristina Cruz González studies

Franciscan visual culture in colonial Mexico. While the essay entices the reader, its illustrations are also poorly produced.

Three artistic studies of individual paintings or illustrated manuscripts follow. Trinita Kennedy studies the 1472 *Translatio* of the relics of St. Bernardine of Siena by Pinturicchio displayed in the Bufalini Chapel in Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome. Following this is a deeply interesting essay by Holly Flora focusing on the illustrated manuscripts of the famous Franciscan devotional text known as *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (*Meditationes Vitae Christi*). Lynn Ransom's essay focuses on another manuscript, *Verges de Soulas* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 9220). The illustrations in both the Flora and Ransom essays are superbly reproduced.

With these local studies, the focus of the volume again returns to theologies that undergird Franciscan artistic expressions. Oleg Bychkov examines aesthetics in Franciscan theology, and Xavier Seubert offers a provocative essay on the transubstantiation of St. Francis. This dynamism between essays by art historians and essays by Franciscan theologians/historians gives the book a bit of a disjointed tone, but it also reminds the reader that proper interpretation of Franciscan artistic expressions demands much more than technical analysis. Given this tension, it is perhaps apropos that the volume ends with Robert Lentz's iconography, beautifully reproduced, and illustrated with a self-reflective text that marries in a contemporary style the theological and artistic.

The number of superb individual essays in this text, the valuable reproductions, and the creative struggle to interweave the artistic and theological make this text a "must have" for university libraries and Franciscan institutions. While many of the essays are intellectually refreshing, many are also provocative, inviting the reader to ponder even the simplest of Franciscan art with a renewed appreciation of the human/divine union.

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