

new insight into just how creatively and imaginatively he responded to the demands of his Franciscan clients.

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IVAN FOLETTI, *Oggetti, reliquie, migranti: La basilica ambrosiana e il culto dei suoi santi (386–972)*. (La Storia dell'Arte: Temi 3.) Rome: Viella, 2018. Pp. 250; many color figures. €35. ISBN: 978-8-8672-8846-5. doi:10.1086/709376

Ivan Foletti, a distinguished early medieval art historian, has devoted a considerable part of his research to the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio (St. Ambrose) in Milan, with a particular focus on its decorations. In this book, Foletti presents the comprehensive results of a decade of work, with the aim—as stated in the introduction, in which the author also explains his investigative method—of offering a new and comprehensive interpretation of the main figurative documents from before the year 1000, existing, now or in the past, in the most revered Christian building in Milan. The sacrality of the basilica, consecrated by Bishop Ambrose (374–97) in the year 386, is linked to the presence of three venerated tombs: those of Gervasius and Protasius, Milanese martyrs whose bodies Ambrose had moved under the altar in the center of the apse; and that of Ambrose himself, buried next to the two martyrs according to his explicit wish. Foletti's objective is to shed light on the links between the types of devotion reserved for these holy bodies and the figurative cycles found in the basilica or in buildings connected to it in various ways, with the ultimate aim of identifying both the religious and political motivations of their patrons.

Organized chronologically, the chapters examine: the lost apsidal mosaic, created (hypothetically) during Ambrose's time, or shortly after his death, for which the author proposes a new reconstruction; the mosaics still adorning the shrine of San Vittore *in ciel d'oro* ("in the golden sky"), adjacent to the basilica (late fifth century); the gold and silver altar in the center of the apse, a sort of monumental reliquary in which Archbishop Angilbert II (824–59) placed the remains of Gervasius, Protasius, and Ambrose; the two (now fragmentary) mosaic panels added to the composition of the apse in the second half of the ninth century, depicting the miraculous presence of Ambrose at the funeral of Saint Martin of Tours; and, finally, the stucco reliefs on the four faces of the ciborium, in which Christ, Ambrose, Marcellina (Ambrose's sister), and a holy bishop (from Milan?) are surrounded by other local saints and figures from the Ottonian court. The author believes the execution of the ciborium decoration—whose date is still debated—is related to the coronation of Otto II and his wife, Theophanu, which took place in the basilica around the year 972. Another chapter is devoted to the destroyed chapel of St. Ambrose that once stood in Genoa, supposedly built by the Milanese bishops during their exile in the city (c. 569–659) following the occupation of Milan by the Lombards, who were Christians but of the Arian confession.

Beginning with these figurative monuments—the mosaics and stucco reliefs in the basilica, along with the altar—and thanks to comparison with data from inscriptions and literary, liturgical, and iconographic sources, Foletti conducts an unexpected reconstruction of the evolution of the cult of Gervasius, Protasius, and Ambrose in early medieval Milan. Foletti argues that initially, the resident clergy would have promoted the veneration of local martyrs, so as to increase the religious prestige of a city that had been an imperial seat (from the late fourth to the late sixth century). However, Ambrose would have subsequently eclipsed the two martyrs, first as a champion of orthodoxy in opposition to the Lombard heretics, from the late sixth to the mid-seventh century, then as the model of a bishop faithful to the empire during Carolingian rule in the ninth century. Finally, at the time of the Ottonian dynasty, all of the saints buried in the Ambrosian basilica (including Marcellina

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and other holy bishops) would have been celebrated collectively, as Milan grew to become the second most important Christian city in the West; following Rome, of course, but in a position of undisputed privilege (tenth century). This evolution would explain some seemingly minor details of the figurative cycles adorning the basilica, for example, the changes in the iconography of Ambrose, which evolves from a portrait at least partially faithful to his actual features (mosaics in the shrine of Saint Victor) into a portrait modeled on the traditional image of Saint Peter (Carolingian mosaic panels).

Foletti's approach is highly original. In particular, he offers a reinterpretation of the different figurative cycles rooted in the perspectives of diverse viewing audiences. He analyzes how the messages of each figural complex were received by the public, which varied depending on their rank: simple laypersons, admitted only in the nave; celebrant clergy, positioned in the chancel during the services; and aristocrats and pilgrims, exceptionally allowed to approach the altar. Consistent with this approach, the evocative illustrative apparatus has been designed to provide the reader with a kind of personal visual experience inside the basilica. In addition, Foletti has used interpretative categories of historical phenomena developed in recent decades, such as the concept of "ethno-genesis," which takes strong identifying characteristics (such as religious beliefs) into account in order to understand the dynamics of integration between indigenous peoples and immigrants in the early Middle Ages. In essence, he believes the evolution of the forms of devotion reserved for Gervasius, Protasius, and Ambrose, as well as their translation into figurative complexes, were affected by contingent factors such as religious conflicts and political alliances.

A limitation to this interpretation of the artistic phenomena is represented by the speculative nature of some crucial passages proposed by the author, for example in the case of the lost apsidal mosaic from the late fourth century (the starting point of the entire study), of which neither images nor descriptions survive. However, Foletti always emphasizes the hypothetical nature of his suggestions, specifying that his intent is to provide a general interpretive framework that goes beyond the large mass of monographic studies already dedicated to the individual artifacts examined here. This book is ambitious and at times provocative, especially in terms of methodology, which will not fail to arouse opposing reactions. However, one hopes it will encourage a healthy debate among scholars and stimulate new approaches to other figurative complexes, for which new avenues of investigation have long been considered exhausted.

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ELISA A. FOSTER, JULIA PERRATORE, and STEVEN ROZENSKI, eds., *Devotional Interaction in Medieval England and Its Afterlives*. (Art and Material Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe 12.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018. Pp. xvii, 411; many color and 11 black-and-white figures, 1 map, and 3 musical examples. \$206. ISBN: 978-9-0043-1506-8.

Table of contents available online at <https://brill.com/abstract/title/32996>.

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This collection of fourteen essays arises out of its authors' participation in a summer seminar, "Arts, Architecture and Devotional Interaction in England, 1200–1600," held in York in 2014 and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. As the editors explain, the seminar was led by Laura Gelfand and Sarah Blick, and aimed to expand upon the concept of "devotional interaction," a term coined by Gelfand and Blick in their earlier, two-volume coedited work, *Push Me, Pull You* (2011). This concept of devotional interaction is defined as encompassing "a variety of interactive and cooperative encounters between devotees, objects, architecture, and environments" (1–2). The volume aims to use this notion to explore the religious culture of medieval England. The intention is "to arrive at a better understanding of what medieval devotion was, but also how it functioned

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