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Horst Appuhn und Renate Kroos

## Rezensionen

HENK VAN OS, *Sieneſe Altarpieces 1215—1460, Form, Content, Function, vol. I: 1215—1344* with a contribution by KEES VAN DER PLOEG on *Architectural and Liturgical Aspects of Siena Cathedral in the Middle Ages*. Groningen, Bouma 1984. 163 pp., 150 ill. black and white, 3 plates in color (including dust jacket).

Sieneſe altarpieces are especially rich and varied in both type and form and this may help to explain how their painters were invited far and wide throughout Europe to work for cardinals, kings, communes and religious orders. Van Os' six chapters, however, are chiefly devoted to altarpieces painted for churches in Tuscany. He begins with the earliest altarpieces painted for Siena Cathedral. He argues that already by the mid-13th century double sided altar dossals existed both in Siena and Perugia and that their creation was favoured by deep choir structures. Then we turn to the altarpieces made for the "urban religious orders" who frequently commissioned the monumental Madonnas. Chapter Three is devoted entirely to Duccio's *Maestà* painted as part of a prolonged program of enlarging the cathedral and its furnishings. The influence of this great altarpiece in its various ramifications is discussed in the fourth chapter devoted to the development of the Sieneſe polyptych. We return to the cathedral in Chapter Five which describes the subsidiary Marian altarpieces painted for the choir altars which incorporated the relics of the city's patron saints removed from the crypt some years earlier. A final short chapter is concerned with Pietro Lorenzetti's formulation of the polyptych for the Sieneſe Carmelites which included full length saints.

Not included in this small volume are examples from either private chapels or public buildings and tabernacles — probably through lack of reliable documentation. Nevertheless, it would have been helpful to have included a brief introduction about what an altarpiece is and where the earliest examples were placed. For instance, how does one distinguish between devotional pictures intended for altars and those which

were not? How are we to imagine the function of Simone Martini's *St. Louis of Toulouse* painted for the King of Naples? How were such popular images as the *Hodegetria* and *Madonna of Humility* used? And what about altarpieces in the context of tombs? Although the title of this volume mentions form, content, and function their roles here are narrowly interpreted.

The best pages in this volume develop some of the author's earlier important contributions: for example, the recognition that scenes (as distinguished from isolated figures) became subjects for a suite of subsidiary altarpieces for Siena Cathedral during the early 14th century. We learn that Simone Martini's Uffizi *Annunciation*, which belonged to this group, incorporates prayers (the *Ave Maria* and part of the Hail Mary) so that ritual and imagery merge. Another important discovery is that the mutilated *Nativity* now in the Fogg Art Museum (Cambridge, U. S. A.), here attributed to Bulgarini, also formed part of the same series.

Often stimulating suggestions are made without the development one hopes for. For instance, having recognized that the series of Marian altarpieces created for Siena Cathedral celebrate feasts of the Virgin, one would like to know more about their liturgical-historical context. Why were just these feasts chosen? Were they celebrated elsewhere — and, if so, how and where? This might have led to speculation concerning prototypes among Byzantine festival icons and mosaics as well as their situation and arrangement (a possibility pointed out to me by William Hood who was kind enough to discuss some of the problems considered here). This might have produced further evidence in support of the author's claims made elsewhere in the text on the importance of Byzantine art generally to the Tuscan Dugento.

But insufficient examination of the liturgical-historical context is less applicable to the first chapter which, indeed, predicates the arrival of altarpieces upon the dogma of eucharistic transubstantiation promulgated in 1215. Arguing along lines similar to Hellmut Hager, *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte des toskanischen Hochaltarretabels* (Munich, 1962), the author describes how pictorial imagery migrated from its lowly place on the front of the mensa to the top of the table where the altarpiece became a materialization of the eucharist. So far so good. But not enough is said about the enormous size of many of these early altarpieces painted in both Florence and Siena between ca. 1260 and 1310. Were they substitutes for the frescoes, mosaics or stained-glass windows which loomed over earlier once picture-less altars as Hager suggested (*Ibid.*, pp. 10ff., 23ff., 137, 160ff.)? Van Os points to sculpture of the enthroned Virgin such as the mid-13th century example at Alatri and there are many other polychromed examples in Italy from the Romanesque period. The difficulty is that we do not know if these were created specifically for altars — the problem has been closely argued by Ilene H. Forsyth with regard to Romanesque examples in France where sometimes they were set upon altars on certain feast days, or they were placed upon separate pedestals or even carried in processions (*The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France*, Princeton, 1972). In any case, their size — whether sculpture, banner, or panel — gave them a dramatic immediacy.

Van Os makes a better case for the influence of sculpture and architecture on the evolution of the Sieneſe polyptych. Nowhere in Italy, up to the late 13th and early 14th centuries, did ſculpture have ſuch importance as on the facade of Siena Cathedral created by Giovanni Piſano and his followers. The immediate impact upon painters of even the moſt different ſtyles (Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti) is evident. Yet, once again one wiſhes that the author had gone further by comparing and conſtrasting their various ſolutions. Was it juſt in this area of formal precedent that the break with tradition came? Did painters turn more to three dimensional models in ſculpture and architecture rather than to a tradition of painting inſpired by Byzantium? This ſeems to have been true of Giotto and it could be argued that this applied to the Lorenzetti as well.

These and other unasked questions ſerve as nagging stimuli which are not among the book's minor merits. In his diſcuſſion of Duccio's *Maestà* painted for the high altar of Siena Cathedral, the author notices parallels in the ſcale and arrangement of certain ſcenes (particularly the *Crucifixion*) with the muraled narratives then ſtill viſible on the nave arcades of Old St. Peter's in Rome (James H. Stubblebine, *Duccio di Buoninsegna and his School*, Princeton, 1979, I, pp. 38 f., 48 f.) which inſpired ſo many pictorial cycles including the then recently completed murals at Aſſiſi. From this, one does not have to go much further to ſee that Duccio's double ſided altarpiece with its elaborate facade-like frame muſt have appeared as a viſion of the Church in microcoſm: Mary as the allegorical gate of Heaven enthroned in majeſty near the croſſing and the triumphal arch — ſites which ſince paleo-Christian times were often adorned with Marian ſubjects (*Ibid.*, I, pp. 6—7; Hager, *op. cit.*, p. 167). As a free-ſtanding, double-ſided altarpiece, Duccio's *Maestà* invites comparison with Giotto's painted at the beheſt of Cardinal Stefa-neſchi for Old St. Peter's notwithstanding its conſtroverſial dating.

Van Os and his collaborator go too far, however, in arguing that the rear face of Duccio's altarpiece either ſubſumed, incorporated or alluded to a Sacrament Altar which they maintain once ſtood at the oppoſite end of the choir earlier in the 13th century. It is one thing to ſay that an altarpiece alludes to the eucharist and quite another to claim the exiſtence of ſacrament altars at this early date. None are known before the 15th century. In fact, one of van der Ploeg's footnotes (n. 103) even remarks that deſpite mounting eucharistic fervour during the 13th and early 14th centuries, no ſpecific place of reſerve for the eucharist exiſted then. It was only the Synod of Gubbio in 1303 which declared that it ſhould be ſtored inside the church at all. As for Siena Cathedral, it was kept in a pyx inſtalled ſomewhere in or near the high altar. (E. Borsook, "Cults and Imagery at Sant' Ambrogio in Florence", *Mitteilungen des kunſthiſt. Inſtitutes in Florenz*, xxv, 1981, pp. 153 f., 191 notes 50—52). The hiſtory of the eucharist and its places of reſerve have been diſcuſſed by De Lubac, Browe, Demoutet, Nuſſbaum, Caſpary, Cope and others — ſome of whom are referred to by the authors but not always with the thoroughneſs one might hope for.

In the chapters devoted to the altarpieces com-miſſioned for the religious orders — e. g. the Dominicans, Servites and Carmelites — it might have been uſeful to quote and ſummarize texts which reveal the particular attitudes of theſe orders towards pictorial imagery. Like Joanna Cannon, whom the author acknowledges, van Os notices that the Dominicans apparently com-miſſioned altarpieces much oftener than the Franciscans

(Joanna Cannon, *Dominican Patronage of the Arts in Central Italy: the Provincia Romana, c. 1220-c. 1320*, Ph. D. Thesis, University of London, 1981; Idem, "Simone Martini, the Dominicans, and the Early Sieneese Polyptych", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xlv, 1982, pp. 69—93). It is well known that Franciscan churches are frequently filled with murals (including fictive altarpieces!) while Dominican churches are not. Was this due to economic and theological factors or to esthetic inclination? Similarly, while murals lend themselves to narrative illustration, usually the altarpiece does not (Duccio's *Maestà* is exceptional in this). Rather, the polyptych encouraged synthesis which, as the author points out, in the hands of the Dominicans assumed a particularly lucid form via the hierarchies of prophets and saints deployed in tiers often replete with appropriate texts. This calls for more background information — e. g. the distinctive theologies of the religious orders and their special view of their mission.

To an extent, this is attempted in the final chapter devoted to the Sieneese Carmelites whose connections with the Holy Land are well outlined and whose veneration of two Byzantine-style Madonnas makes them a particularly interesting subject for this book. The dismembered altarpiece painted for them by Pietro Lorenzetti includes a panoramic scene as well as a series of episodes in its predella with numerous parallels in murals painted by Pietro and his brother Ambrogio. Ambrogio also painted a multi-scened predella for an altarpiece destined for Florence (for S. Procolo) which is not included in the book's discussions.

Also absent is a concluding chapter which would draw the various threads of argument together. Among the complaints about other aspects of the book are the frequent mention of documents for which only secondary sources are cited (e. g. pp. 11, 82, 92). Figures 48 and 64 are missing and several of the captions are bewildering: what is meant by a "wrap-around pictorial frame" for Fig. 73? In Fig. 104 it is unclear if "painted over" refers to repaint or just indicates the position of a saint with respect to a predella scene. Where are the shaded areas referred to in Diagram 3 on p. 111? Although the text on p. 17 says that the *St. John* dossal in the Siena Pinacoteca is a Byzantine work, the caption for it in Fig. 8 states that it is Sieneese. Then, when interesting data is given on the early repainting of Coppo di Marcovaldo's Orvieto Madonna, no sources are given (name of restorer and date of his work, publications if any). Why do the bibliographical references follow the Italian rather than English style? Why is "urban chauvinism" preferred to civic pride?

Kees van der Ploeg in his appendix (which comprises the latter third of the volume) does cite chapter and verse for the documents used in his discussion of the early history of the crypt and choir of Siena Cathedral. The author makes the important discovery that before ca. 1260 there were two altars along the central axis of the canons' choir. He also describes how relics were transferred from the crypt to the church proper and what the structural consequences were for the cathedral.

Van der Ploeg's principal source is a little consulted early 13th century text on the liturgical procedures used inside Siena Cathedral. An annotated edition of this manuscript was published in the 18th century by G. C. Trombelli and van der Ploeg promises a new critical edition of his own which is clearly needed. In the meantime, he

has thoughtfully provided English translations together with the Latin texts relevant to his discussion. My insufficient proficiency with Latin does not permit me to judge the merits of the author's interpretation of *exaedra* as the crypt; or of the location of the burial sites of bishops and priests either there, in the choir, or in the crossing. However, the lack of comparison with other monuments leaves me with lurking doubts. On the matter of choirs extending into the nave, the author says this was characteristic of Northern Italy, but in Florence Santa Croce had one also behind its rood screen where its location is commemorated by a marble inlay in the nave floor. Santa Maria Novella in Florence also had such an enclosure.

Some of van Os' excellent earlier studies have, I fear, spoiled me for this volume. His *Marias Demut und Verherrlichung in der Sienesischen Malerei 1300—1450* (The Hague, 1969) was a pioneer work on the Marian cult in Siena and its imagery. It is a mine of historical and theological information and made one aware of the meanings of these pictures and the circumstances which gave rise to them. Therefore, it is with regret rather than ingratitude, that the reviewer finds that this new volume simply does not make the most of its theme. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Van Os' six chapters are based upon lectures rather than upon the kind of sustained interdisciplinary research which characterized *Marias Demut*.

Eve Borsook

GERT KREYTENBERG, *Andrea Pisano und die toskanische Skulptur des 14. Jahrhunderts (Italienische Forschungen, 3. Folge, Bd. 14). München, Bruckmann 1984. 424 Seiten mit 499 Abbildungen. DM 358,—.*

The major virtue of this book lies in its magnificent series of 499 excellent plates. There are numerous well-chosen details and the figures in the round are, for the most part, shown in two, three, or even four, equally well selected views. The definition is generally excellent and the lighting has been designed to give clear and informative, rather than dramatic and misleading, results. A photographic corpus of this quality and completeness constitutes a work of scholarship in itself and, all in all, it is hard to see how it could have been done better. As an introduction to the sculptures for the general reader and as a working tool for succeeding scholars, it will prove invaluable for years to come.

As far as the text is concerned, the main body is naturally devoted to Andrea Pisano and above all to the Baptistry doors and the problems surrounding the sculpture of the Campanile, but there is also a substantial Appendix on his sons Nino and Tommaso, together with his grandson, Andrea di Nino. This is followed by a further Appendix containing 31 rejected attributions to Andrea and Nino which seems to be entirely reasonable.

Another virtue of the book is that it sets out all the documentary records, together with full references, including those to their previous publication. The setting out of documents is, however, one thing and the analysis of their implications quite another.