

MITTEILUNGEN
DES KUNSTHISTORISCHEN
INSTITUTES
IN FLORENZ



LXII. BAND — 2020
HEFT 2/3



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Inhalt | Contenuto

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_ Aufsätze _ Saggi

_ 127 _ Armin F. Bergmeier

The Production of *ex novo* Spolia and the Creation of History in Thirteenth-Century Venice

_ 159 _ Charles Dempsey

Angelo Poliziano and Michelangelo's *Battle of the Centaurs*

_ 181 _ Jason Di Resta

Negotiating the Numinous: Pordenone and the Miraculous *Madonna di Campagna* of Piacenza

_ 209 _ Maria Gabriella Matarazzo

Ciro Ferri *delineavit*, Cornelis Bloemaert *sculpsit*: una collaborazione artistica per due antiporte di committenza medicea

_ 237 _ Oronzo Brunetti

La carriera di uno scalpellino nel Settecento: Francesco Cerroti, da Settignano a Roma

_ 267 _ Andreas Plackinger

Weiblichkeit und Distinktion im Selbstporträt von Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun für die Galleria degli Autoritratti in Florenz

_ Miszellen _ Appunti

_ 297 _ James Pilgrim

Moretto's Map

_ Nachrufe _ Necrologi

_ 310 _ Monika Butzek (*Julian Gardner*)

MONIKA BUTZEK

(1944–2020)

With the death of Monika Butzek the Kunsthistorisches Institut has lost a faithful servant and a distinguished scholar. She played a crucial role in the development of the landmark research project *Die Kirchen von Siena*.

Born in Bad Landeck in Silesia (now Łądek-Zdrój in modern Poland) the daughter of a garden architect, Monika Butzek moved with her family to the West in January 1945, eventually settling in Wiesbaden. Completing her Abitur there she undertook a volunteer post in the archive of the newly founded second German television channel ZDF, during that period housed in a villa at Wiesbaden: it was evidently a formative experience. Subsequently, in 1965, she began her studies in the history of art, history, and archaeology at the university of Mainz. After having spent a semester each at the Freie Universität Berlin and the university of Vienna in 1967/68, in 1969 she moved definitely to the Freie Universität, where she gave up archaeology in favour of Italian language and literature and began to study for her doctoral degree under the direction of Professor Heinrich Thelen. There followed a two-year period of preliminary research for her doctoral thesis at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome (1970–1973) under the auspices of



the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Several lifelong Roman friendships were forged in those years. She completed her thesis in 1975. Its title *Die kommunalen Repräsentationsstatuen der Päpste des 16. Jahrhunderts in Bologna, Perugia und Rom*

provides scant indication of its pioneering aspect and its importance. By considering the sculpted figures of reigning popes within their political and topographic contexts she moved significantly beyond the earlier studies of Werner Hager and Gerhard Ladner. It is a dissertation which retains its importance today. It would later provide her with the background for an important article, “Die Pöpstmonumente im Dom von Siena”, which was published in this journal in 1980.

While she awaited a museum post for which to apply she became a *Stipendiatin* at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence from 1976 until 1981. It was a transformative moment. Shortly thereafter she was appointed research assistant and later collaborator, together with Hans Teubner, in a path-breaking new project, *Die Kirchen von Siena*, directed by Max Seidel and Peter Anselm Riedl. As the first sentence of the introduction to volume I announced its goal was to provide a counterpart to *Die Kirchen von Florenz* of Walter and Elizabeth Paatz, but (it did *not* add) on a vastly more ambitious scale. The proj-

ect was to cover all artistic media. Documentary analysis was to underpin comprehensive discussions of buildings, paintings, sculpture, and church furnishings. The stated aim was to provide a new vision of Sieneese history and Sieneese art. To this ambitious new enterprise Monika Butzek was to devote her scholarly life.

She took particular pleasure in uncovering new historical sources or art-historical nuggets from the archives, and for this kind of investigation she showed an extraordinary talent. The documents printed in the *Corpus* have become an unrivalled point of access to many aspects of Sieneese art and its history. It also enabled her to produce many innovative and thought-provoking new assessments, on Donatello in the duomo of Siena or on the sculptor Giuseppe Mazzuoli and his workshop. In 2001 she wrote a luminous chapter on the four great early Trecento side altarpieces of the duomo in the article “Le pale di Sant’Ansano e degli altri Protettori nel Duomo di Siena. Una storia documentaria” for the volume *Simone Martini e l’Annunciazione degli Uffizi* edited by Alessandro Cecchi. This quartet of masterpieces framed the high altarpiece by Duccio di Buoninsegna, and she also did much to disentangle the prehistory of the high altar and its decoration. Here, a significant step forward was her article “Per la storia delle due ‘Madonne delle Grazie’ nel Duomo di Siena” published in 2001 in *Prospettiva*, as was also the chapter “Die Vorgängerbauten des heutigen Doms” in the first part of volume III of the *Corpus*, *Der Dom S. Maria Assunta*. Siena also provided her with lifelong friendships in the archives, in the Soprintendenza and at the University. Her passionate commitment to Sieneese history was early recognized in the city by her election as member of the Accademia Senese degli Intronati.

There were other notable contributions to the completed volumes of the *Corpus*. One of her final contributions was the separate Beiheft *Gli inventari della sagrestia della Cattedrale senese e degli altri beni sottoposti alla tutela dell’operaio del Duomo (1389–1546)*, which will be a reference work of enduring value.

Modest and unassuming, Monika Butzek was generous with advice and archival information to generations

of scholars at all stages of their careers. Despite declining health, her welcome to visitors was always warm and positive. The seclusion of her office in the institute was a deliberate choice. A few years after her retirement in 2009 she returned to Wiesbaden, where she was able to indulge her love of flowers, another of her lifetime passions. After a long illness, she died on 3 July 2020. With her passing an era in the history of the Florentine institute in the Via Giusti draws to a close. Her scholarly achievement and intense personal commitment made an indelible contribution to its success.

Julian Gardner

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