



## Serra, Alessandro. La mosaïque des dévotions. Confréries, cultes et société à Rome (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)

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part of Sebregondi's article is devoted to an analysis, with accompanying illustrations, of the splendid series of frescos in the confraternity oratory depicting St. Martin of Tours and then the seven works of charity as carried out by the Buonomini (78–98). She follows this with a discussion of the various objects in the oratory, including the late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth-century reliquary bust of St. Antoninus, and then, room by room, an array of other works such as two early sixteenth-century candle-holding angels, a glazed terracotta by Andrea Della Robbia, an eighteenth-century map of Florence by Giovan Battista Scarlatti Rondinelli. The variety of objects, artworks, and furniture in the building speaks to the plethora of objects, both sacred and secular, both practical and aesthetic, that one could find in an early modern Florentine confraternity, even when a confraternity claimed to adhere to poverty and use all donations it receives to assist the needy poor.

Laura Luciola's contribution to the volume is a short description of the restoration of the frescos in the oratory completed in June 2011 ("Il restauro del ciclo di affreschi dell'oratorio"; 125–147). She outlines the reasons for, and techniques used in the renovations and then follows this up with a series of 'before and after' photographs of the work.

This finely crafted volume brings together excellent archival scholarship and superior production standards to provide scholars, for decades to come, with a substantial historical and art historical analysis of the Buonomini, as well as high quality images of the confraternity's artworks, sacred objects, furnishing, and architecture.

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**Serra, Alessandro.** *La mosaïque des dévotions. Confréries, cultes et société à Rome (XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*. Louvain: UCL Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2016. Pp. 367 + 8 maps, 13 charts, 24 graph. ISBN 978-2-87558-495-3 (paperback); 978-2-87558-496-0 (pdf). € 27.50.

Alessandro Serra's book on Roman confraternities between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries offers countless insights not only into the varied world of confraternities but also into the history of piety in Rome. The book is divided into five chapters; the first four analyse the presence of the confraternities in the Eternal City, their names and places of worship, the role of sacred images in confraternal spaces, and the relics owned by these associations, and the fifth offers a single case study of the archconfraternity of the Sacre Stimate (the stigmata) of St Francis.

The book opens with a preface by Bernard Dompnier, who underlines the value of the volume as “a portrait that, without ignoring previous research results, is striking for its originality and persuasiveness” (p. iii, my translation here and hereafter). In the introduction that follows, Serra presents his methodology, which seeks to “broaden the perspective offered by the ever-growing production of confraternal historiography by resorting to the suggestions, both methodological and interpretative, provided by studies on cults, sanctity and hagiography” (15).

In the first chapter, Serra presents the main elements of the Roman confraternal movement, highlighting its evolution and distribution throughout the city. He points out, for example, how each confraternity develops as “a living organism that, far from being fixed once and for all, constantly changes and transforms” (51). He highlights the internal structure of the associations, their devotional and confessional practices, and the importance of the institution of links between confraternities through the system of archconfraternities. All these elements allow us to understand how the confraternal world conformed to the “project of transforming Rome into a living emblem of the reform of the Catholic Church” (65).

The second chapter analyses the confraternities’ devotional choices, paying particular attention to their names and places of worship. The analysis of these variables shows the coherence of the confraternities’ choices with the main cultic tendencies towards Marian and Christic devotion, while showing also a certain openness towards new saints by naming altars (though not confraternities) in their honour. Serra’s analysis of confraternity altars reveals the importance of these “modern” saints and bears witness to “the introduction of various local cults, promoted by the various national confraternities present in the city” whose devotion, however, “is generally confined to the places of worship of the various ‘foreign’ communities” (113).

Votive images constitute the core of the analysis developed in the third chapter. These images appear to have a triple function. Using the example of the three icons of the Virgin in the church of San Salvatore in lauro (which housed the confraternity of the Virgin of Loreto), Serra shows how these images are a “symbol of identity” for the immigrants from Ascoli Piceno that founded and adhered to this confraternity, but also how they can help to understand the “circulation” and “penetration” of devotions in Rome, confirming their role “in the process of permanent redefinition of the devotional offerings of the confraternities” (153).

The fourth chapter focuses on relics, whose importance in confraternities increased progressively from the end of the Middle Ages on. This development can be interpreted as an effect of both “the growing prestige invested in the confraternal institution in the post-Tridentine religious climate” and a veritable “proliferation of relics extracted from the Roman

catacombs after the rediscovery of the subterranean city in the sixteenth century” (157). Two specific aspects can be identified in this process: a “devotional” approach to relics and a tendency to accumulate them without any particular distinction. Both these attitudes are part of a “strategy of sacralisation of confraternal spaces” (190).

In the last chapter, Serra focuses on the history of the Archconfraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis, showing how it was established and evolved in Rome, and how its success among different social groups reveals the intensity and fluidity of its religious experience. In this perspective, the archconfraternity proves to be an important factor in the development of “both horizontal and vertical social relations,” presenting itself as a “testing ground for the members of the city’s religious elites [...] more demanding and eager to follow a path of Christian life, rooted in an ascetic spirituality with a strongly Christocentric tone” (242).

After two appendices, one consisting of eight topographical maps and the other of a list of confraternities in Rome, the volume ends with a conclusion in which Serra stresses the role of confraternities in the history of piety, “a privileged observatory of religious sensibility and devotional choices” (244) over the course of time. To quote from Dompnier’s preface, Serra’s text “stands out for the richness of its information on religious life in Rome as well as for the originality of its approach to modern Catholicism” (vi).

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**Ventra, Stefania.** *L’Accademia di San Luca nella Roma del Secondo Seicento: Artisti, opere, strategie culturali. Quaderni sull’Età e la Cultura del Barocco, 2.* Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2020. xliv, 370 + 171 plates, 90 ill. ISBN 978-88-222-6682-8 (paperback) €55.

From its unapologetic introduction, Stefania Ventra’s investigation into the artists, work, and cultural strategies of the Accademia di San Luca seeks to overturn the misconception that the academy represented a fortress of Classicism in terms of artistic philosophy and praxis, a space where Roman academic traditions of the seventeenth century stood in direct opposition to the Baroque, with the former being the predominant didactic, dictated by the institution.

An ancient and important organisation, primarily concerned with the education of young artists, but with a confraternal branch and various devolved powers that extended into the city’s civic sphere, the academic culture of the Accademia di San Luca, from Ventra’s perspective,