

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Feigenbaum, Gail and Sybille Ebert-Schifferer (eds.). Sacred Possessions: Collecting Italian Religious Art, 1500–1900

Randi Klebanoff

Volume 36, numéro 1, hiver 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091187ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20032>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Klebanoff, R. (2013). Compte rendu de [Feigenbaum, Gail and Sybille Ebert-Schifferer (eds.). Sacred Possessions: Collecting Italian Religious Art, 1500–1900]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(1), 177–179. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20032>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2013

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

that remain, but Miller's editing is copious and apt enough to give the teacher scope for a further judicious selection.

JUDITH RICE HENDERSON, *University of Saskatchewan*

Feigenbaum, Gail and Sybille Ebert-Schifferer (eds.).

Sacred Possessions: Collecting Italian Religious Art, 1500–1900.

Issues and Debates. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011. Pp. vii, 248. ISBN 978-1-60606-042-1 (paperback) \$30.

Sacred Possessions is an impressive, even sprawling, anthology of essays on the collecting of Italian Renaissance religious art ca.1500–1900. The organization of the book is both thematic and roughly chronological. Fourteen chapters are organized into three parts: “Aesthetics of the Sacred,” “Instruments of Faith and Passion,” and “Aesthetic Devotion.” The collection—proceedings of a 2007 conference in Rome—is decidedly a book for specialists, but the potential audience is varied. It will be of interest to scholars whose research encompasses the collecting and afterlife of Italian religious art, to be sure, but, due to the chronological and methodological scope of the essays, it will also appeal to scholars of Renaissance and Baroque art (part 1), those interested in the history of collecting more generally, particularly in the establishment of private collections of religious art both real and imagined (part 2), and readers interested in the roots of the modern cult of art in the long nineteenth century (part 3).

The scholarship is of a uniformly high calibre, and the editors have done their job. The first chapter, Brenda Deen Schildgen's “Cardinal Paleotti and the *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*,” roots the redirection of religious art into secular economies of exchange firmly in sixteenth-century thought. Schildgen points out that Paleotti, while claiming that truly sacred art is possessed of the potential to inspire spiritual knowledge, also allowed for differentiation in the reception of religious art. By focusing on *diletto* (enjoyment) as a virtue that appeals on three ascending levels of the sensual, rational, and spiritual, and by situating the coordinates of its perception in the merits of the viewer as well as the artwork, Paleotti accounts for a diversity of audiences and contexts for religious art, including profane ones. Early modern theory might

have accounted for the shift of religious artwork to profane environments but not to profanation, and the rest of the essays in this part deal in one way or another with the issue of decorum. An attempted recontextualization of an altarpiece for the secular sphere of collecting by Rubens is the concern of Karen Buttler, while questions of decorum, fame, and defamation by Caravaggio and the Caravaggisti are problems addressed by Valeska von Rosen and Todd Olsen. Returning to the theorization of religious art in the secular world with an examination of Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (1619–21), Frances Gage's essay ends the first part.

Part 2 begins with three case studies of religious art collecting from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century: Maria Giulia Aurigemma's "Sacra in a Tower: The Cardinal of Augsburg's Paintings and Reliquaries in 1566" describes a sixteenth-century meditational journey as architectural ascent through collections of paintings, reliquaries, and books; Dóra Sallay writes on Nazarene influence on the collections of Christian art by nineteenth-century ecclesiastical intellectuals in Hungary and Italy; Ralph-Miklas Dobler describes the art collection of eighteenth-century Roman Lawyer Tommaso Antamoro as interplay of social aspiration and devotional practice. Cinzia Maria Sicca takes the discussions in another direction, away from the collecting and display of art to the early eighteenth-century "paper museum" documenting primarily ecclesiastical objects by the English artist John Talman. Like Aurigemma's discussion of the Cardinal of Augsburg's tower, Sicca presents Talman's work as that of an antiquarian hoping for the restoration of Catholic practices in a hostile environment, a subject that will be taken up again in part 3 by Tristan Weddigen who argues for the Dresden Picture Gallery of Augustus III as "a Crypto-Catholic Collection." Nina Reidler's essay on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere* finishes the section by looking at the role that religious art plays in the world of late nineteenth-century decadent literature. With Reidler's discussion, the collection shifts focus from diversely secular contexts for religious art to the transmutation of the sacred remainder in religious art in the developing cults of aesthetic devotion.

Tristan Weddigen lingers on the muse of Correggio in Augustus III's picture gallery—in particular his siren of erotic devotion, *The Penitent Magdalene*—while the ghost of Raphael, or rather the saintly poltergeist that first arose in the imagination of late eighteenth-century Romantics, presides over the rest of part 3. Andreas Henning recounts the transmutation of

Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* over the course of the nineteenth century "from sacred to profane cult image," as it successfully usurps Correggio's *La Notte* for the place of honour in the Dresden picture gallery. Angela Windholz reconstructs a nineteenth-century monument to the salvific effects of Raphael in her study "'Savior, Prince of Color': The Collection of Raphael Copies in the Orangery in Potsdam (1858)." In the final essay of the collection, Inge Reist takes the reader up to the early years of the twentieth century, when the chief prize for American captains of industry in their acquisition of culture for the New World was the largely elusive Raphael Madonna.

The editors' claim for the essays in *Sacred Possessions*—that they demonstrate how "the collecting of religious art in Italy and the collecting of Italian religious art elsewhere constituted a special case within the larger study of collecting"—can be substantiated only by a much larger comparative study, a field for which this book prepares the ground. More to the point is the expansive list of questions posed by Feigenbaum and Ebert-Schifferer in their introduction. Rather than assert a single thematic or theoretical centre, *Sacred Possessions* is a witness to the complex diversity in the use, possession, and perception of Italian religious art within European and American cultures of collecting during the long early modern period.

RANDI KLEBANOFF, *Carleton University*

Greenblatt, Stephen.

Shakespeare's Freedom.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. Pp. 144. ISBN 978-0-226-30667-4 (paperback) \$14.

In Shakespeare's "strictly hierarchical society that policed expression in speech and in print" (1), how did he understand and enact artistic freedom? Stephen Greenblatt, editor, biographer, and acclaimed interpreter of Shakespeare, outlines a series of answers with deft readings and illuminating comparisons over the course of Shakespeare's career, answers that pertain to concepts of beauty, hatred, authority, and autonomy. Drawn from his Adorno lectures at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt and revised in the Campbell lectures