

2012 3:1

San Francisco

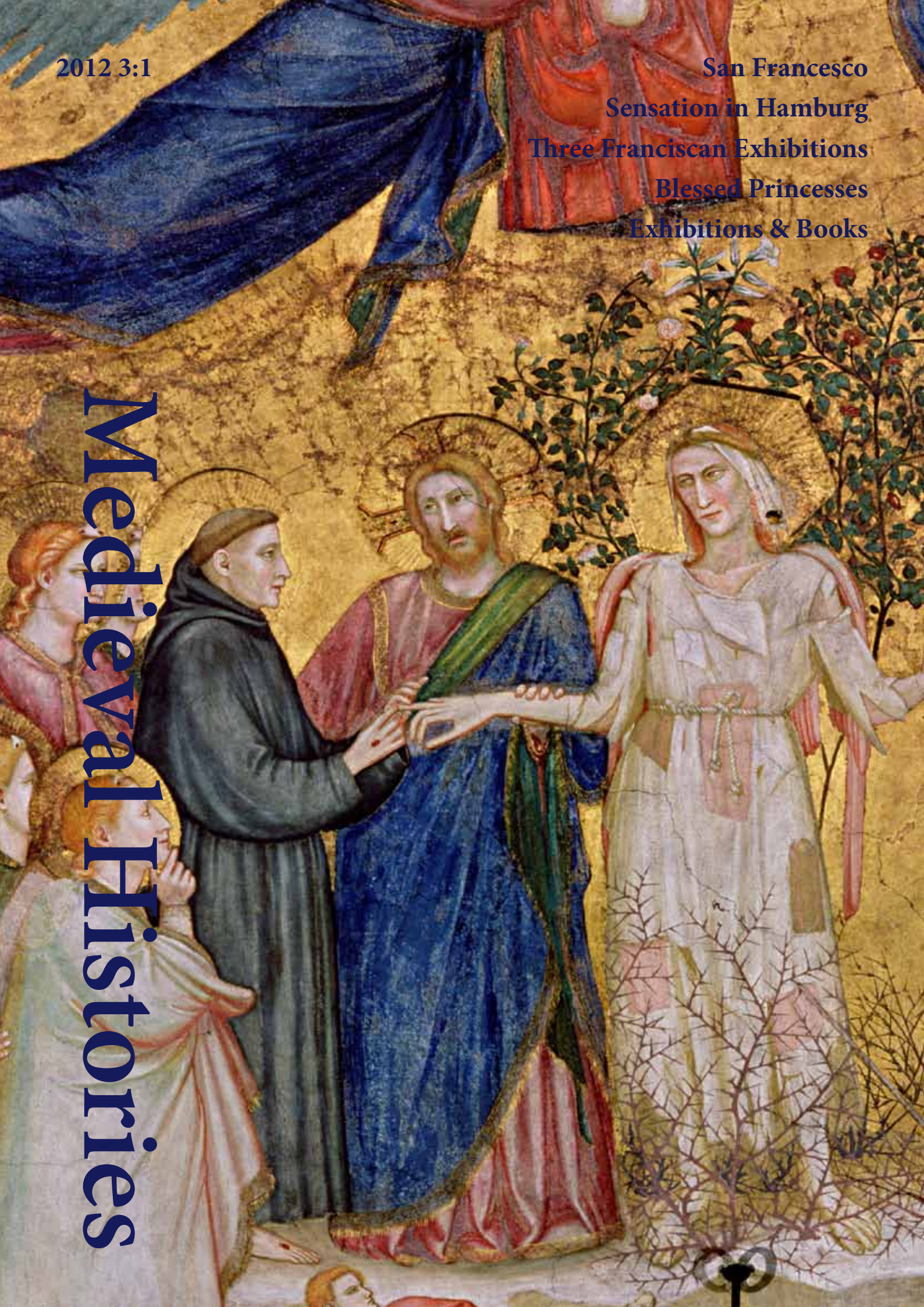
Sensation in Hamburg

Three Franciscan Exhibitions

Blessed Princesses

Exhibitions & Books

Medieval Histories



Medieval Histories

News from the medieval world about
anniversaries, exhibitions, books, films,
music, travels and new research

News: Double portrait of San Francesco stirs the Italians

An Archeological Sensation in Hamburg

San Francesco, Santa Ciara and Svaté Anežky

Blessed Princesses

Exhibitions in Europe: Spring 2012

New books - in English, French and German

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Photo (frontpage):

San Francesco is married to Lady
Poverty
Giorgio Bondone in S. Francesco,
Assisi, 1320
© Stefan Diller



Giotto da Bondone in Santa Croce, Firenze - the death of San Francesco

Dante and Giotto - two portraits

Italy is blessed with philosophers that abstain from barren “philosophizing” in order to engage vigorously in the life and times of their neighbours. One such is Massimo Cacciari, professor turned politician. Born in Venice he received his doctorate on a thesis on Kant and held a number of professorships in Venezia as well as Milano. At the same time, however, he joined politics, first as a communist, later as a left-winged liberal. In 1993 he was elected mayor of Venezia, but was defeated in 2000. Again in 2005 he ran for office. Currently he is once again serving as mayor.

Although declared atheist he has recently published a small book about the patron saint of Italy, San Francesco, and the two different understandings of the legacy of the saint as presented by the double portraits of Giotto and Dante.

According to Cacciari, Giotto and Dante each in their own way “used” the saint to further their respective ideas about the “good life”.

On one hand Giotto presents an idealised picture in his powerful circles of paintings in both Assisi and Santa Croce in Firenze; witnessed for instance by the depiction of the deathbed, where San Francesco is depicted clothed in a brown tunic, although the different vitae tell us of him naked, lying on the bare floor. Thus Giotto presents a picture of the saint less radical and more in tune with the official policy trying to reign in his radical followers.

On the other hand Dante presents a picture of the man as in essence otherworldly – as imitator Christi; as witnessed in his mystical marriage to the bitter old lady of poverty, followed by his later stigmatisation and reaching an apex in the famous scene of the saint dying in the arms of his beloved – Domina Paupertate.

The small pamphlet – no more than 80 pages – stresses this opposition in order to show how San Francesco, understood as a Chris-

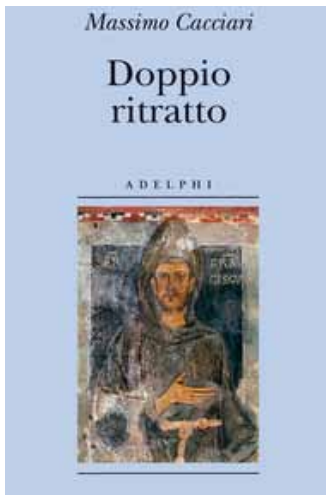
tus Redivivus shocked the traditional way of thinking, spurring a new way forward for radical social change, political as well as civil.

While Giotto presents a sanitized San Francesco, who is one with the church – the establishment – Dante presents another “sanitized” picture, where poverty signals fullness, freedom, openness to others, ability to empty one self and become the other - in short become “Christ-like”.

There is no doubt that the reflections of Chiara are meant to open up for a debate about the dilemmas of the present economic world crisis. Should we opt for askesis and austerity and the man rising as the sun from the East? Or should we bargain for the accommodation to earthly wealth and worldly practices, to growth and for another rescue package from the coffers of EU?

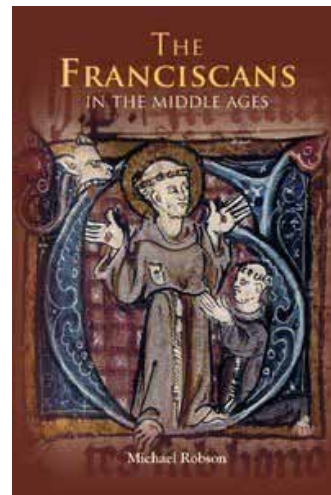
An Italian dilemma – and a European!

Where to start...



Doppio ritratto.

San Francesco in Dante e Giotto
Massimo Cacciari
Editore Adelphi. Collana Biblioteca minima. 2012



The Franciscans in the Middle Ages

Michael Robson
Boydell & Brewer 2006



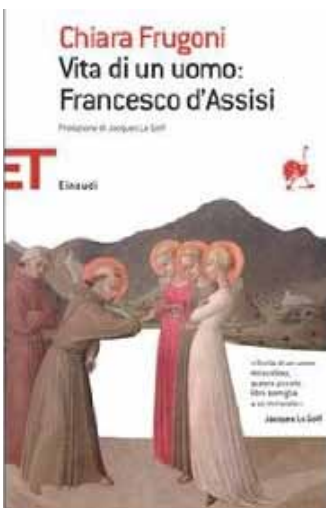
Le storie di San Francesco.

Guida agli affreschi della Basilica superiore di Assisi. Con DVD. Ediz. italiana e inglese
Chiara Frugoni
Einaudi. Collana Einaudi tascabili 2010



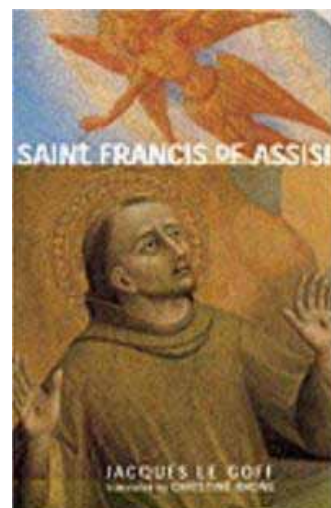
Storia di Chiara e Francesco

Frugoni Chiara
Editore Einaudi 2012
Collana Frontiere Einaudi.



Vita di un uomo: Francesco d'Assisi

Chiara Frugoni
Einaudi, 1995.
English translation 2005



Saint Francis of Assisi

Jacques Le Goff
Gallimard 1999
English edition: Routledge 2003



A 15th century idealised presentation of the Count Adolph who turned Franciscan. © Michail Jungierek

An Archeological sensation in Hamburg

The Franciscan cloister in Hamburg was demolished in 1806-07 and nobody really knows what it looked like. Recent archaeological excavations have however resulted in remarkable findings. As the history behind the cloister is rather fascinating, the archaeologists are excited. The story goes:

In 1231 Count Adolph IV von Schauenburg won a decisive victory over a Danish army headed by the King, Valdemar Sejr. The story behind is that of a German Count Heinrich von Schwerin, who kidnapped the king and his son in 1223. In a Danish chronicle the incident was described as follows:

“1223. King Valdemar was together with his son treacherously kidnapped, while they were lying in their beds, by count Heinrich at the island of Lyø of the 6th of May. They were taken to the castle of Schwerin. There they had to stay the next three years, while the Danes ransomed them for 60.000 mark Lübisch. But the horses, clothes and other things, which were captured by the Saxons that year was worth the double. Notice reader, that the Germans never or

very seldom have won and triumphed without deceit and treason, as it is in their nature, which is apparent from the kidnapping of the two kings and from many other incidents.” (Rydårbogen).

From other sources it appears that the count was the vassal of the king and had taken part at both the hunt and the following party. His plan was to deliver the two kings into the hands of the holy Roman Emperor. Unfortunately the Pope intervened and threatened with ban if the king was not returned unharmed. The emperor held back, but the German counts continued to pursue a heavy ransom. After some warring it ended at Christmas 1225 with the release of the king and at Easter 1226 with that of his son. The ransom was extremely heavy. All in all it consisted of 45.000 mark plus the jewels of the queen Berengaria plus equipment of dresses and horses for 100 knights. Added to this was the loss of all the land between the rivers Ejderne and Elbe (the duchy of Schleswig-Holstein) plus the Slavic provinces captured in the endless wars along the Baltic and Northern German seashore. Well at home, the Danish king mus-

tered an army in order to pursue the aggressors and regain the lost. July 1227 the two armies met at Bornhöved in Holstein where the army of the king was routed. The king barely escaped, but with the loss of an eye,

One of the counts, which took part in the politics and the battle of Bornhöved was Adolph IV, the count of Schauenburg. According to the legend he prayed to God and promised to found a cloister if the Germans won the battle. Miraculously the weather shifted, the Danes lost and the Franciscans got their new Maria Magdalena cloister in Hamburg. In 1239 the count himself withdrew to live according to the Franciscan rule and in 1244 he was ordained a priest in Rome. His last years were however spent in another Franciscan cloister in the city of Kiel (which he also founded).

The new archaeological findings consist of foundation stones of the church as well as graves.

Contact:
www.helmsmuseum.de

Three exhibitions:

Svatá Anežka, Santa Chiara and San Francesco



Svaté Anežky as shown on a capital from a column in her cloister in Prague

Svatá Anežka in Prag

Agnes of Bohemia (1211 – 1282) must have been a rather remarkable person. She grew up as a wilful princess refusing a marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor, Federico Barbarossa. Instead she became fascinated by the legacy of San Francesco and used her inheritance to establish and build a hospital for the poor as well as a convent for the poor ladies – the poor Clares or Damians, as they were initially called. As sister to the Bohemian king, she continued using his clout to politick the Pope, in order to get a proper rule reflecting the original Franciscan way of life. In this she was supported and abetted by the wilful machinations of her soul mate, Santa Chiara. Four remarkable letters from their correspondence is preserved, witnessing the unique relationship, which existed between the Umbrian saint and her Bohemian pupil. And all that time she laboured ceaselessly to keep faith with her original vow of poverty.

Unfortunately not much of this background story is presented at an exhibition currently staged in the buildings of her convent in Prague, which today is used as a gallery. Instead we are treated to a number of (more or less baroque) artistic renderings of her life and

times. This might have been less maddening, if you know Czech and is able to understand the long and probably very interesting video, shown in the former Capitulary of her cloister; or if you can read Czech and decide to buy the old fashioned catalogue weighing half a rain-forest with little text and large margins.

If not, however, the exhibition is still worthwhile. The reason is, that somehow – if you use a lot of time – you can get a rather precise feeling for the living conditions of Svatá Anežka Česká and her companions in her cloister; which by the way at the same time was the royal shrine for amongst others her brother and his wife.

To be “Franciscan” was without doubt de rigueur at that time and in that family. Another celebrity was the cousin of Agnes, St. Elisabeth of Thüringen. Nevertheless it must have taken guts to defy

the demands of a father, using her other sisters for diplomatic pawns in the European power-play during the reign of Federico Barbarossa.

Naturally, it all ended badly and she probably died of hunger during lent 1282, when the whole country was in terrible turmoil and crisis, suffering from war, hunger and epidemics. Very soon she was beatified. Canonization, however, had to wait until the eve of the velvet revolution in 1989.

San Francesco in Paderborn

Already in 1217 Francesco and his friends discussed expansion to other countries and during the following years friars left for France, Germany, The Holy Land, Portugal, Spain and a bit later England, Scotland, Hungary and Scandinavia. It has always been held as one of the astonishing feats, how quickly the “new” Franciscan gospel spread through the rest of Europe and beyond. Germany is a very good example. In the late summer of 1221 friars passed through Trent. By the Middle of October they had convened chapters at Augsburg. From here they went to preach at Würzburg, Mainz, Worms, Speyer, Strassbourg, Köln, Regensburg and Salzburg. And on, and on and on..

Before 1250 there were at least 73 friaries and 19 Clarisser-convents in central Germany as well as a countless number of small houses of followers belonging to the tertiary orders. As is well known, during this period of expansion, the friars gradually slid from the

Information:

Sv. Anežka Česká,
Convent and gallery at U Milosrdných 17, Praha 1 - Staré Město
25.11.2011 - 25.03.2012,
tuesday to sunday, 10 - 16.00
www.ngprague.cz



Santa Chiara, Kloster Riebnitz

original ideas of their founder. At the same time they were formally recruited into the papal missionary effort. Accordingly the friars little by little learned how to “borrow” their riches from their benefactors, thus circumventing the original taboo of ownership of land, cattle and people (serfs). What was originally a radical and hence peaceful way of life devoid of feuds, litigation and micro-management, gradually turned into a more “normal” priestly business. Although there continued to exist pockets of rebellious zealots – especially amongst the poor Clares - most friars ended up with rather cosy lives. One result of this development was the

Information:

Franziskus. Licht aus Assisi.
09. 12. 2011 - 06. 05. 2012
Diözesanmuseum und
Franziskanerkloster, West-
ernstraße 19, Paderborn,
Deutschland
Katalog zur Ausstellung.
Hirmer Verlag 2012

accumulation of art, books and treasures celebrating the richness of their spiritual inheritance. Right now, in Paderborn, a huge exhibition showcases these riches and the traditions stemming from the many German monasteries, which were the result of the missionary effort of the Franciscans.

Although the exhibition is more than proud to be able to showcase a few spectacular loans from the central institutions in and around Assisi, this is thus not the real merit. The joy is the bonanza of “German” art and artefacts.

As usual in Germany the catalogue is an overwhelming bonanza of beautiful illustrations and explanations of the exhibited treasures.

San Francesco in Rieti

The Rieti valley, east of Rome, is well known to any Franciscan Friend. It holds a number of sanctuaries full of memories and relics from the life and times of the tiny brother: Greccio, where he celebrated Christmas Mass with live animals and where the tiny “baby” came alive; the sanctuary at Poggio Bustone, where he started the mission; Fonte Colombo, where he dictated one of his rules and where he painted his signature, the Tau next to the altar; and finally the sanctuary of Santa Maria della Foresta, where his host complained of all the visitors, who trampled his grapes in order to get near to the holy man. (Later of course his harvest was more than abundant).

Further, these tiny sanctuaries are surrounded by a distinct beauty and lots of quiet nature. In the Rieti Valley we understand intuitively the many fables about St. Francis and his nature loving attitude

towards every living creature – the birds, the tiny “brother” rabbit or the wolf.

Tired of the bustle of El Camino? Then it is an excellent idea to plan an alternative pilgrimage along the narrow paths from Rieti to Rome. In Rieti it is possible to get packaged tours as well as good general information including pre-booked hotels and dinners along the path.

Further, this summer Rieti hosts an interesting exhibition with art depicting St. Francis, covering some of the earliest artworks up till now. The exhibition is housed at three venues inside the city of Rieti: In the Palazzo Comunale from the 13th century, the Palazzo Vescovile with the diocesan gallery and at the Complesso San Giorgio.

Information:

Francesco il Santo, Rieti:
16.06 - 04.11.2012
www.francescoilsanto.it

Walking in the Valle de Rieti:
www.camminodifrancesco.it

Cimabue, San Francesco



Blessed Princesses

One of the very odd shifts, which took place in the early 13th century had to do with the way in which the princely houses of Europe changed their cultural outlook in terms of family policy. Up until then they had all scrambled to get a male family member as patron saint.

Epitomized in the concept of a Rex Justus the pantheon was populated not only by such more or less mythical figures as Æthelbert of Kent (560 - 616) but also Canute IV of Denmark (1042 - 1086), his son Charles I, Count of Flanders (1083 - 1127), David I of Scotland (1083 - 1153), Eric IX of Sweden

(1120-1160), Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor, 972 - 1024, Ferdinand III of Castile, 1199 - 1252), Olaf of Norway (995 - 1030), Leopold III, Margrave of Austria 1050 - 1136; not to mention the latecomer, Louis IX (1214 -1270).

In the beginning of the 13th century, however, it became fashionable to people the pantheon anew; this time with female saints. Many of whom were inspired by Santa Chiara and modeled on the primary archetype: St. Elisabeth of Thüringen.

One reason behind this was the attempt of the church to get a

grip on a number of more or less “heretical” movements like the Cathars, the Waldenses and the Umiliati. It is well known that one of the reasons why the work of San Francesco was not outlawed, had to do with the willingness of his followers to submit themselves to the stipulations and government of the pontificate.

One specific challenge was however to find a way to regulate the female counterpart; not only the holy women like Santa Chiara and her friends and family, but also the beguines, the pinzocheres and the other so-called “mulieres religiosae”. It is here the curious institution of the blessed princesses seemed to offer a solution.

In its essence it consisted of the virtuous lives of a number of closely related half-sisters and cousins from central Europe. Through their adoption of lives characterized by voluntary poverty and social service, a venue was opened up for another career than marriage or contemplative cloistering.

St. Elisabeth of Thüringen

The most prominent was of course St. Elisabeth of Thüringen, who was married at 14 and widowed as 20. Led by a brutal and dominant priest, Konrad von Marburg, she embarked on a new holy career building hospitals and dispensing her money as alms to the poor. After her death she was canonized in 1235. It was generally believed that she had joined the third (lay) order of San Francesco; however, whether this was ever formalized is not substantiated.

The “Cross of Dagmar”. Copies may be bought in the shop at The National Museum of Copenhagen





St. Elisabeth of Thüringen, The church of St. Elisabeth of Damp

One legacy was her inspiration of her cousins, Anne and Agnes, daughters of the Bohemian king, Ottokar I Přemysl and Constance of Arpad. Agnes is the best known – she is the one who founded the “Damian” cloister in Prag; but her sister also ended up in a convent of Poor Clares after she was widowed in 1257. All in all a recent monograph lists nine saintly queens and princesses belonging to this group. And then the author even forgot a couple of outsiders, who may even have been sisters.

Dagmar of Bohemia and Denmark

One was Markéta Přemyslovna, half-sister to St. Agnes. In 1205 she was married to the Danish king, Valdemar 2. Before she could realise any saintly aspirations – if she had any such – she died in childbirth 1212. However, at some point she was remembered in four ballads as an especially “good” person filled with compassion and mercy towards the people of her adopted nation. According to the ballad her only sin was to wear tight sleeves

on Sundays. Dagmar was eventually buried in the family mausoleum cum saintly shrine in Ringsted.

Today, apart from the ballads, she is primarily remembered for her reliquary cross, which was allegedly found in her grave in 1695.

The cross is 3.4 x 2.9 cm and 0.3 cm thick. It is formed as a reliquary cross in order to hold a piece of the “real” cross. Back and front are covered in delicate worked enamel. On one side is a representation of the crucifixion, on the other side five medallions: In the centre Christ Eternal, at his right Mary, and his left John the Baptist. On top is a picture of Basileos from Cappadocia and at the bottom St. John Chrysostomos. Probably the cross was made in Byzantium or in Russia. Whether it belonged to Dagmar or the sister of her husband, Valdemar, is disputed. Most believe it was brought from Russia with Sophia, the mother of Valdemar and Richiza.

Guglielma of Bohemia

Agnes as well as Markéta (or Dagmar) may even have had another sister. She is however primarily remembered because her saintly ambitions – if she ever had any – ended badly.

The first we hear of Guglielma of Bohemia is when she, together with a grown-up son, arrived in Milano around 1260. Here she made a contract – a vitalizio – with the Umiliati convent of Santa Catharina di Biassona and the Abbey of Chiaravalle. As a devout widow she lived the rest of her austere life there until she was buried in the abbey in 1281. Immediately afterwards she became the center of a small cult. The reason, why

we know of her, is that she seems to have been a charismatic personality and that she contracted a number of followers, which after her death tried to get her not only canonized, but also “deified” as part of a kind of an apocalyptic vision. In 1300 the inquisition got whiff of this and started to mop it up, thus leaving us with the minutes of the trial of her small band of followers.

Due to these records we know that one of her proselytes went to Bohemia after her death in order to get help for her canonization. He testified that she was indeed the sister of the late king (and hence the sister or half-sister of St. Agnes). Unfortunately this cannot be verified. She might have been born in Ottokar’s first litter with a wife, he discarded.

Quickly after her death the monks at Chiaravalle succeeded in bolstering her cult. Twice a year her office was publicly celebrated and any miracles were faithfully recorded. At the same time, however, the nuns and inmates

Guiglielma painted around 1450 in the church in Brunate at Lago di Como. Notice her strange headdress. She used to wear a golden crown!



of the convent of Biassona established the alternative sect, where Guiglielma was celebrated as the reincarnated Holy Spirit. Naturally it all ended badly. The devoted “high priests and priestesses” in this secret cult ended up being interrogated, tortured and burnt. Guiglielma herself was excavated,

burnt and her ashes spread on the ground.

Somehow the veneration of this saint-never-to-be was nevertheless kept alive in the villages around Milan. Which made it resurface some time in the 1425, when a friar of Ferrara wrote a really

phantasmal vitae or rather hagiographic romance.

The amusing end of this story is that in the end Guiglielma ended up being venerated, but as a very local saint in the tiny village of Brunate near Lago de Como.

The cloister of St. Agnes in Prag



Read about the Blessed Princesses:

The Privilege of Poverty

Clare of assisi, Agnes of Prague and the Struggle for a franciscan Rule for Women.

Joan Mueller

The Pennsylvania State University Press 2006

Holy Rulers and Blessed princesses

Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe

Gábor Klaniczay

Past and Present Publications

Cambridge University Press 2002

The Heretic Saint: Guglielma of Bohe-mia, Milan, and Brunate

Barbara Newman

In: Church History, vol 74:1, 1 - 39 March 2005

Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c.1100-c.1500

Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Ed)

Brepols Collected Essays in European Culture

vol. 1. Turnhout Brepols Publishers 2010

Catch it while you can!

Medieval Exhibitions in Europe 2012



Sv. Anežka Česká

Saint Agnes of Bohemia

25. 11. 2011 - 25. 03. 2012

St. Agnes Convent and Gallery , Prag, Czekia



Franciskus

Light out of Assisi

Paderborn, Germany

09. 12. 2011 – 06. 05. 2012



Splendours of the Middle Ages.

The abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno in the time of Charlemagne.

22. 01. 2012 – 04. 11 2012

Venafro, Molise, Italia



The Romance of the Middle Ages

28. 01. 2012 - 13. 05. 2012

Bodleian Library , Oxford, England



Goldene Pracht.

Medieval treasures in Westfalen.

26. 02. 2012 – 28. 05. 2012

Domkammer zur Münster, Münster, Deutschland



Gaston Fébus (1331-1391) Prince Soleil

18. 03. 2012 - 17. 06. 2012

Musée du château de Pau, Les Pyrenees, France



Flemish Miniatures

27. 03. 2012 – 01. 07. 2012

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France



Cluny, 1120

The Abbey and the Church at Cluny in 1120

28. 03. 2012 – 02. 07. 2012

Musée national du Moyen Age, Paris, France



Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry

04. 04. 2012 – 25.06. 2012

Le Louvre, Paris, France



Verbündet, verfeindet, verschwägert.

Bayern und Österreich.

19. 04. 2012 – 06. 11. 2012-03-11

Burg Burghausen, Altötting, Deutschland

Kloster Ranshofen, Stadt Braunau, Österreich

Schloss Mattighofen, Braunau, Österreich



Schatz für die Ewigkeit

Manuscripts from the time of Heinrich II in the Cathedral of Bamberg

14. 05. 2012 – 11. 08. 2012

Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Bamberg, Deutschland



Der Frühe Dürer

24. 05. 2012- 02. 09. 2012

Germanisches National Museum, Nürnberg, Deutschland



Golden Flashes

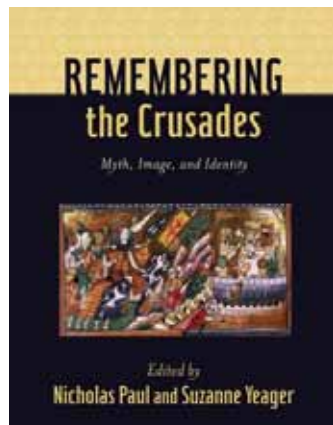
The international Gothic in Florence from 1375 to 1440

19. 06 2012 – 04. 11 2012

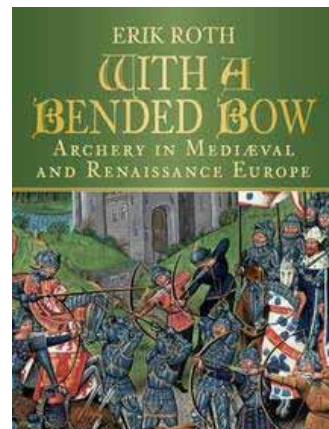
Galleria degli Uffizi, Firenze, Italia

March 2012

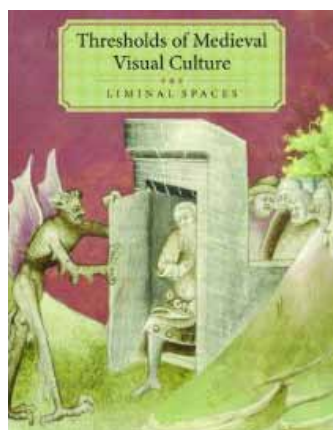
New Books - in English



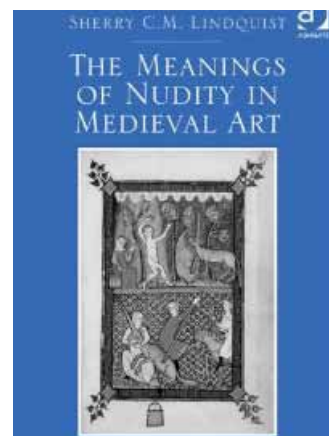
Crusades:
Myth, Image, and Identity
(Rethinking Theory)
Nicholas Paul (Editor),
Suzanne Yeager (Editor)
The Johns Hopkins University Press 2012



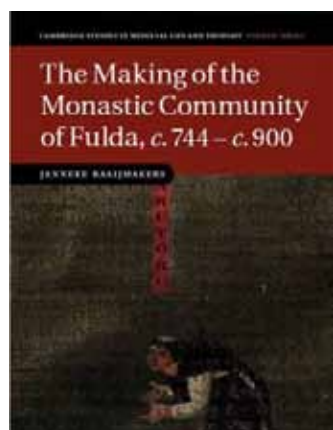
With a Bended Bow:
Archery in Medieval and Renaissance Europe
Erik Roth
The History Press Ltd
2012



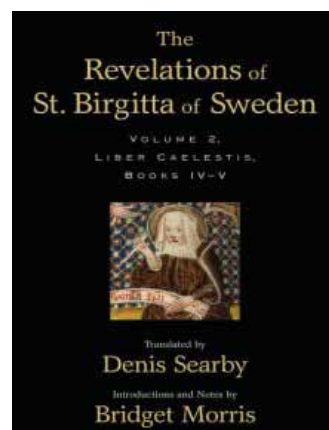
Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture:
Liminal Spaces
(Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture)
Elina Gertsman (Editor),
Jill Stevenson (Editor)
Boydell Press 2012



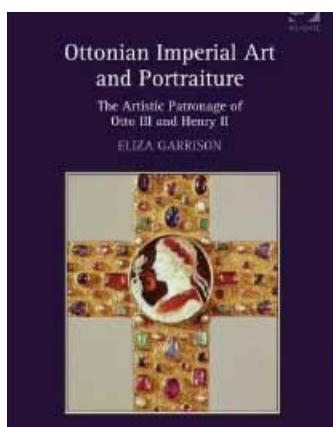
The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art
Sherry C.M. Lindquist
Ashgate 2012



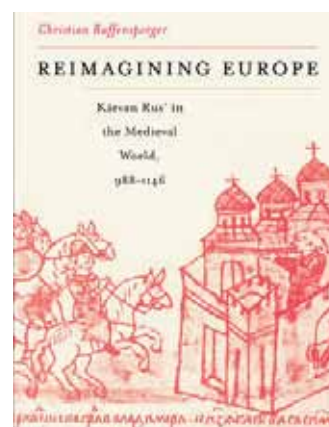
The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c.744 - c.900
(Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series)
Janneke Raaijmakers.
Cambridge University Press 2012



The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden
Volume 2: Liber Caelestis, Books IV-V
Translated by Denis Searby
Introductions and Notes by Bridget Morris
Oxford University Press, USA 2012



Ottonian Imperial Art and Portraiture
Eliza Garrison
Ashgate (2012)



Reimagining Europe
(Harvard Historical Studies)
Christian Raffensperger (Author)
Harvard University Press

March 2012

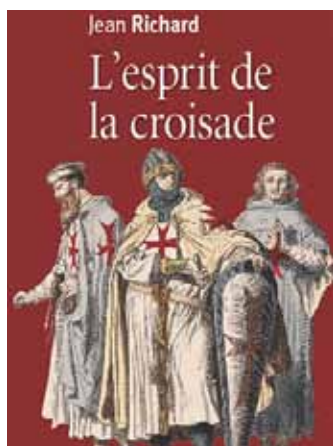
New Books - in French and German



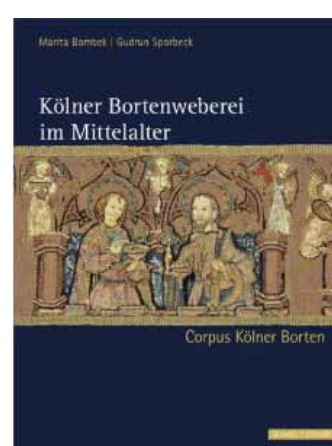
La naissance du capitalisme au Moyen Age: Changeurs, usuriers et grands financiers
Jacques Heers
Librairie Académique
Perrin 2012



Geistliche Spiele im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit: Von der liturgischen Feier zum Schauspiel. Eine Einführung
Ursula Schulze
Schmidt (Erich), Berlin
2012



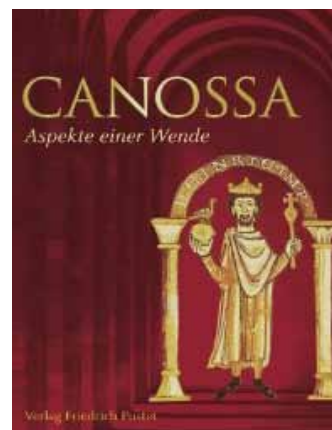
L'esprit de la croisade
Jean Richard
CNRS 2012



Kölner Bortenweberei im Mittelalter: Corpus Kölner Borten von Marita Bombek, Gudrun Sporbeck und Thomas Blisniewski
Schnell & Steiner (2012)



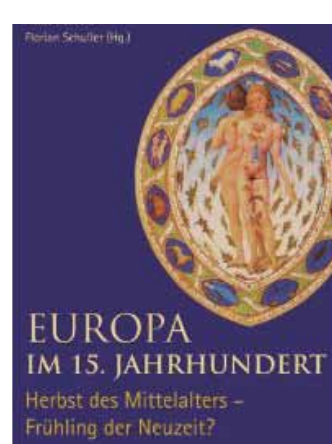
Jeanne d'Arc : Biographie historique
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Klaus Herbers (Editor), Florian Schuller (Editor)
Pustet, Regensburg; 2012