

Giuseppe Pavanello, ed. *La Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo: Pantheon della Serenissima*.

Chiese Veneziane 1. Venice: Marcianum Press, 2013. 526 pp. €110. ISBN: 978-88-6512-110-8.

Marcianum Press in Venice is rendering outstanding service to the investigation of Venetian churches with two new series. One is entitled *Chiese di Venezia, Nuove prospettive di ricerca*, and its first publication encompasses the proceedings of a conference on the church of the German community, San Bartolomeo (*La chiesa di San Bartolomeo e la comunità tedesca a Venezia*, ed. Natalino Bonazza, Isabella di Lenardo, Gianmario Guidarelli [2013]). The other series is simply called *Chiese Veneziane*, and its first volume, which is the subject

of this review, is on the Dominican church Santi Giovanni e Paolo, also called Zanipolo. Coproduced by the Fondazione Giorgio Cini and edited by its former director Giuseppe Pavanello, this beautifully produced and reasonably priced book will constitute the point of reference for all future studies on the church. Its approach is comprehensive. It contains often very thorough entries on virtually all the works of art in the church and discusses the architecture of the church, including its restoration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the convent. Most authors are established scholars from Italy and abroad, many with close ties to the Cini. Some of the best entries, however, are by young Italian scholars who offer genuinely new scholarship.

The chapters on the decoration are arranged chronologically, with a strong emphasis on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Each chapter consists of a short introductory essay followed by discussions of the individual works, which clearly constitute the real concern of the book. All of the entries offer a summary of the scholarship and deal with questions of patronage and style, in addition to providing useful bibliographies. Some must be considered proper essays, such as Vincenzo Mancini's discussion of Bonifacio de' Pitati's Saint Michael altarpiece. Mancini carefully analyzes the convoluted history of the patronage, which helps him to establish the altarpiece's date. Monica De Vincenti's study on Andrea Tirali's gigantic Valier monument equally offers new results. Namely, she demonstrates that the allegories on the pedestals are based on Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. Carlo Corsato's discussion of Giovanni Bellini's lost Santa Caterina altarpiece focuses on the Dominicans in Venice and the veneration of Saint Catherine and thus offers a new interpretation of this influential altarpiece, which hitherto has been primarily discussed in relation to its contribution to the development of the Renaissance *pala* in Venice.

Corsato's contextualizing approach is so refreshing precisely because most contributions are narrowly focused and do not address larger sociohistorical issues. While readers learn about the patrons of the individual works of art, they hear little about the Dominicans in Santi Giovanni e Paolo. In part this is because the mendicants systematically sold their church and commissioned few works of art themselves. But not even the chapters on the architecture — although in and of themselves very useful, particular regarding the monastery — offer a discussion of the spiritual profile, concerns, and role of the Dominicans in Venice. This omission is all the more surprising as Maria Elena Massimi, who did not contribute to the volume, has recently provided precisely such a study in her provocative book on Paolo Veronese's so-called *Feast in the House of Levi*. The most controversial work of art in Zanipolo, after all, and the cause for a spectacular Inquisition trial, was commissioned by the Dominican friars. Massimi's study offers fascinating insights into the controversial debates that divided the monastery into conventuals, who had a more lax spiritual attitude, and the more rigid observants, who probably favored Veronese's festive compositions. There is no word of this division in the book, however.

For the coming volumes in the series it would therefore be desirable to pay more attention to the historical context. Few visitors to Venice realize that Santi

Giovanni e Paolo took its name not from the apostles John and Paul but from two Roman martyrs. Why the mother house of the Dominicans in Venice was dedicated to such rather obscure saints would certainly deserve analysis, yet this hefty publication does not even mention it. However, none of these reservations can take away from the great merit of this volume and one can only hope that Marcianum Press continues the series with the same care and dedication.

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