

Richard J. Goy. *Building Renaissance Venice: Patrons, Architects and Builders c. 1430–1500*.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. x + 316 pp. index. append. illus. gloss. bibl. \$65. ISBN: 0–300–11202–0.

This carefully researched, thoughtfully organized work suggests that the *renovatio urbis* of Venice, a term usually associated with the splendor promulgated by the sixteenth-century Doge Andrea Gritti and expressed first by Jacopo Sansovino and then Andrea Palladio, began in spirit and in stone in the preceding century. *Building Renaissance Venice* focuses on the fifteenth century but the general character of its title is not inaccurate, for Renaissance Venice as we know it would be incomplete without the buildings examined in this book. The works of Bartolomeo Bon, Mauro Codussi, and the Lombardo brothers, along with the great civic landmarks of the Porta della Carta, the Arsenale Gate, and the Torre dell'Orologio, all established important precedents that laid the foundations for the glories of the Cinquecento.

With this book, the author strikes a middle ground between his earlier in-depth study of the Ca'D'Oro, *House of Gold*, and his survey, *Venice: The City and Its Architecture*. As its title suggests, *Building Renaissance Venice* is an active exercise in the entire architectural process. The first chapters address the role of Venice as a capital and revered republic, along with the demands for appropriate self-presentation that this reputation imposed. The role of the patrons, be they the government of the republic, the Scuole, or wealthy individual merchants, is laid out carefully before turning to the tradesmen who laid the bricks and mortar of the projects. With this foundation in place, the author then assesses each of the most important architects in fifteenth-century Venice. These essentially biographical chapters are interwoven with chapters dedicated to works of less-certain authorship: the Arsenale Gate and the Torre dell'Orologio. Richly documented with archival evidence and tempered by astute observations, this book will have a special appeal to anyone who has fallen under the spell of a firsthand archival account of a longterm project. Goy skillfully integrates nuggets of documentary treasure with better-known facts to enrich and enhance the material he presents.

His in-depth treatment of the practical aspects of building is beautifully balanced with historical context, patronage issues, and iconographic analysis of the projects. For example, Goy suggests that although a doge was not allowed to be the direct patron of a civic work, the tenor of his rule was nonetheless made manifest in the works initiated during his tenure. Pasquale Malipiero, doge during the construction of the Arsenale Gate, lived and ruled by a philosophy of peace as a precondition for strength and stability. This spirit is certainly inherent in the triumphal structure and symbols of power incorporated into the gate. Doges Foscari and Barbarigo, whose tenures coincided with the Porta della Carta and the Torre dell'Orologio, respectively, incorporated their own images into the monuments, a reflection of the forceful personalities of both men.

Although the portrait of Barbarigo was removed during Napoleon's iconoclasm, it is curious that Goy does not explore the visual links that would have been

forged between Barbarigo and Foscari, both shown kneeling in reverence with the Lion of St. Mark. The pair would have established a visual and historic unity between the perpendicular facades of the clock tower and the Porta della Carta that was probably more than coincidental. The subsequent addition of Andrea Gritti in the same format on the Piazzetta facade of the Doge's Palace also suggests that visual unity among the facades was an intended effect.

Jacopo de' Barbari's woodcut map of Venice, dated to 1500, is a fitting *terminus ante quem* for this book, and the author makes frequent reference to it. However, it is not illustrated in its entirety anywhere in the volume. Likewise, the argument that the Porta Aurea in Pola was a seminal influence on the triumphal form of the Arsenale Gate would be strengthened by an illustration of the proposed predecessor. These are but minor quibbles, and are largely offset by the author's ability to describe architecture with both accuracy and inspiration, using words to sketch structures in our mind's eye.

The book concludes by peering ahead and assessing the importance of the fifteenth-century gestation of the idea of *renovatio urbis* and how it reached maturity in the architecture of the sixteenth century. One can only hope that a work as comprehensive and thought-provoking as *Building Renaissance Venice* might soon appear to address the first half of that century, providing a link between Goy's present work and Tracy Cooper's recent book, *Palladio's Venice*.

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