

Frithjof Schwartz. *Il bel cimitero: Santa Maria Novella in Florenz 1279–1348: Grabmäler, Architektur und Gesellschaft.*

I Mandorli 8. Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009. 524 pp. append. illus. map. chron. bibl. €68. ISBN: 978-3-422-06823-0.

While Italian Gothic tomb sculpture has been researched extensively in recent years, it has never been as intimately connected to its architectural context as in Schwartz's study on Santa Maria Novella. By linking the *avelli* tombs that line the *cimitero superiore* and the church façade to building history, the author constructs an integrated sculptural and architectural monograph. Moreover, he looks at the church in a fundamentally different light, not only as a setting for preaching, teaching, and the performance of ritual, but as a burial site and commemorative space provided by the Dominicans for Florentine citizens. The tomb patronage reveals the workings of the convent as a social institution in this quarter of the city. Schwartz's volume opens up a dynamic new approach to the study of Mendicant architecture.

The introduction (in English) by Julian Gardner highlights essential points. Instead of viewing the tombs as conditioned by setting and liturgy, Schwartz asks how they impacted the architectural history of the building. It was not only contributions from the Florentine Commune and papal indulgences, but also *avelli* patronage that produced significant economic support for the building campaign. While wall tombs had been discouraged by Dominicans at midcentury, by the 1280s the friars and laypersons adopted them wholeheartedly, creating a new phase in Italian Gothic architecture. The construction of exterior *avelli* finds precedents in Liguria and Venice. On the interior, the figural wall tombs of Dominican bishops established an influential new tomb type.

Chronological issues in the building history led to the recognition of the importance of the *avelli*. The original church of 1246, which faced Piazza Vecchia, was extended southward with a new nave and cemetery beginning 1279/80. The dating, as well as the political symbolism, of Cardinal Latino's support is carefully reexamined. As the style of nave piers shows, the east aisle and south façade lower walls, including their *avelli* niches, were constructed first. These were conceived as a commemorative space for the laity, but also in relation to the contemporary expansion of the city walls. The façade *avelli*, still emblazoned with crests of *magnati* families, some of whom also had tomb chapels inside the church, record the major private donors. The author's discussion of construction funding is particularly useful, and new testamentary evidence is incorporated into a chronological building history, which supersedes all previous attempts in clarity and precision.

The tombs tell the story not only of construction history, but also of social status and the late medieval drive to commemorate family and individuals. Three of five chapters are focused on the *avelli* niches, the floor tombs, and the wall tombs of Dominican bishops. After considering the etymology and usage of the term *avello*, Schwartz examines interior and exterior examples. He argues that their uniformity discouraged individual families' aristocratic display. Although standardized in

a formal sense, this social corollary that they had a leveling, or democratizing, effect is not convincing to this reviewer. With their original frescoes, such as the *sinopia* depicting the church in the Girolami niche (which surely reflects Fra Remigio dei Girolami's importance as prior and patron), the *avelli* would have been far more ornate and differentiated than they appear today. The progressive development from the thirteenth-century exterior *avelli* to fourteenth-century interior examples could have been clarified further. The section on floor tombs depends partially on earlier scholars' work, but develops a broader vision of patronage, using a variety of *sepoltuari* manuscripts (which are illustrated). The analysis of tomb placement suggests important social and gender distinctions. The pivotal role played by Bishop Cavalcanti's wall tomb, which established an Episcopal tomb type, is convincingly argued. Excellent photographs and plans support all this research.

Besides a few minor issues, one serious flaw is the lack of an index. Although the text is topically outlined, this is not sufficient for such dense material. This omission impedes study of family patronage and social history, which, ironically, is a governing principle in Schwartz's approach. Nonetheless, his volume significantly deepens our understanding of Santa Maria Novella and its place in later thirteenth-century Florence.

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