

her purchase, arguing that as the merchant was flogging it across Italy, she bought it to prevent public embarrassment to Ippolita. Clark's research into the correspondence documenting a family argument that entangled ambassadors and kings offers precious insight into conceptions of honor and reputation, as well as a rare glimpse into the lived experience, values, and emotions of distant historical personages.

An iconographic analysis of Ercole de' Roberti's diptych, owned by the avid collector of religious painting Eleonora d'Aragona, anchors the longest chapter, which is a consideration of intertextuality in the court of Ferrara that feels like the center of this book. An appendix of Eleonora's inventories is enlightening. Clark insists on the formal analogy between the folding diptych and a book; she brings to light the plethora of copies and variations spawned by Eleonora's Roberti, buttressing her argument for the agency of objects.

Clark's study of the Order of the Ermine, founded by King Ferrante of Naples, not only explains why so many weasels appear in Renaissance art but also proves to be the book's most subtle and effective case study of diffusion and dissemination. Analyzing the deployment of the order's regalia, Clark shows how the ermine constituted a powerful sign that was circulated geographically, temporally, and across media. Like the ermine, the scope of Clark's book reaches well beyond collecting.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.399

The Realism of Piero della Francesca. Joost Keizer.

Visual Culture in Early Modernity. London: Routledge, 2018. xii + 146 pp. \$150.

Joost Keizer's *The Realism of Piero della Francesca* is a valuable addition to scholarship on the Renaissance painter by writers such as James Banker, Marilyn Lavin, Eugenio Battisti, J. V. Field, Carlo Ginzburg, et al. The research is thorough and the writing is erudite. The main focus is an analysis of the *Flagellation*, painted in the 1460s, currently in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino. The argument of the book, as stated in the introduction, is that for Piero "a painting did not *make* a new reality"; rather, it showed (*dimonstrare*) "an a priori world" (10). The a priori world is made up of personal associations for the painter, portraits, and architectural details. Piero's understanding of perspective "cultivates the illusion that his painting depicts a scene discovered rather than made or invented" (14), particularly in the *Flagellation*, where parts of objects are behind corners, and where the flagellation is not at the vanishing point or the focal point of the painting. Again, "painting repeats a world already there; it does not show a world invented by the painter" (34). The argument reflects a picture of Renaissance art in general as involving a suppression of personal style in favor of establishing universal standards of beauty and ways of seeing.

It is made clear that Piero's compositions are syncretic, that they are constructed by collaging together various examples of people and architectural details either imagined from antiquity or copied from contemporary sources. The author concludes, for example, that the three figures on the right of the *Flagellation* are examples of specific historicist references arranged as part of an *istoria*, as are the architectural details, taken from both ancient examples and contemporary architecture in Urbino. Piero's *Montefeltro Altarpiece* is an even better example of a syncretic architectural composition, combining references to several contemporary architects—Alberti, Luciano Laurana, Francesco di Giorgio, Bramante—as the author points out. The syncretic compositions are then organized in a mathematical and geometrical constructed space using Euclidean geometrical solids and one-point perspective, in order to establish universal standards for perception and judgment. As the author says, "Piero's perspective imagined a kind of painting that left no room for stylistic differences between one painting and another, even when they were produced by wildly different artists" (33). This approach to painting was influenced by Leon Battista Alberti, who advocated a combination of syncretism with an underlying geometrical organization (lineament) in order to produce a *concinnitas*, a universal beauty where the whole of a composition exceeds the parts. All of the different historicist references in the façade of the Santa Maria Novella—for example, classical, Islamic, Gothic, Romanesque—are united in a harmonious composition by the underlying mathematical and geometrical harmonic proportions, achieving *concinnitas*, establishing an approach that transcends style and has more cultural resonance, and representing a culture that sees itself as the culmination of all previous cultures.

According to the author, Piero located the origins of a painting "in the visible world, which the artist, with the help of perspective, claimed to be replicating or repeating, with a clarity unmatched by our own experience of the world" (33). And later, "Piero designed his rigid method of perspective to cultivate the impression that art replicated reality unmediated" (93). I find a contradiction in these statements. If art replicates reality unmediated, then how is the visible world replicated with a clarity unmatched by our experience? A thorough reading of Piero's treatise on perspective in painting, *De Prospectiva Pingendi*, confirms the role of a certain type of mediation. According to Piero, objects in the sensible world are transformed into images in the eye through mathematics and geometry. "It is the form of the thing, rather than the thing itself, without which the intellect cannot judge nor can the eye comprehend the thing" (1942, 64; my translation). It is easy to argue that Piero's paintings are not composed from reality but, rather, are syncretic arrangements unified in mathematical and geometrical constructions, constructed representations of reality. While the main argument of the book needs to be more developed and resolved, the book poses interesting questions and inspires further research and investigation.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.400