

The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticities. Erin J. Campbell, Stephanie R. Miller, and Elizabeth Carroll Consavari, eds.

Visual Culture in Early Modernity. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013. xiii + 268 pp. \$109.95.

Composed of twelve essays arranged in four parts, the book deals with various aspects related to domestic interiors in early modern Italy, originating from a conference session, “New Perspective on the Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600,” held at the College Art Association in 2007. Part 1, “Domesticities,” features three essays: “Uno palazo bellissimo’: Town and Country Living in Renaissance Bologna,” by Catherine Fletcher, who discusses the households of merchant Francesco Casali; “From Padua to Rome: Pietro Bembo’s Mobile Objects of Convivial Interiors,” in which Susan Nalezty examines the role of portable objects in the creation of a domestic identity; and Adelina Modesti’s “A casa con i Sirani’: A Successful Family Business and Household in Early Modern Bologna,” which is on the house-studio of the Sirani family of artists and the

particular role of the painter and printmaker Elisabetta Sirani. Part 2, “People, Spaces, and Objects,” also made up of three essays, begins with “Parenting in the Palazzo: Images and Artifacts of Children in the Italian Renaissance Home” by Stephanie R. Miller, an interesting analysis that looks at domestic representations of small-to-teenage children of the Florentine patriciate. It is followed by “The Venetian ‘portego’: Family Piety and Public Prestige,” where Margaret A. Morse investigates the use of such crucial space for self-representation of familial piety. The last, Erin J. Campbell’s “Art and Family Viewers in the Seventeenth-Century Bolognese Domestic Interior,” investigates the role of art objects in domestic social processes and rituals.

Part 3, “Domestic Objects and Sociability,” comprises five essays. The first, “Chi vuol essere lieto, sia’: Objects of Entertainment in the Tornabuoni Palace in Florence,” by Maria DePrano, examines the topic while adding to our understanding of the functions of ground-floor chambers, normally associated with business or utility though also used for ludic or academic purposes (as in the Palazzo Mancini in Rome: see Manolo Guerci, *Palazzo Mancini* [2011]). In the second, “‘Il mare di pittura’: Domestic Pictures and Sociability in the Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Interior,” Elizabeth Carroll Consavari explores pictures as a medium for socializing and entertaining. The third, by Katherine A. McIver, “Let’s Eat: Kitchens and Dining in the Renaissance Palazzo and Country Estate,” discusses the crucial role of hospitality and dining as well as the relationship it bears on the architectural plan (and vice versa). The fourth, Allyson Burgess Williams’s “Silk-Clad Walls and Sleeping Cupids: A Documentary Reconstruction of the Living Quarters of Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara,” shows the complex duality between private and public functions of Lucrezia’s apartment, while the last, by Jennifer D. Webb, examines “‘All That is Seen’: Ritual and Splendor at the Montefeltro Court in Urbino,” touching on the various domestic rituals, including dining, hygiene, and bathing, at the elaborate court of Federico. Part 4, “Objectifying the Domestic Interior,” concludes the book by way of presenting two essays: “Objectifying the Domestic Interior: Domestic Furnishing and the Historical Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance Interiors,” by Adriana Turpin, and “Recreating the Renaissance Domestic Interior: A Case Study of One Museum’s Approach to the Period Room,” by Susan E. Wagner. Both provide a useful perspective on the historiography of Renaissance studies and histories of collecting in particular.

One of the goals of this book, as the editors specify, is “to provide an historical perspective on the question of ‘What is home’ and especially ‘What is the domestic’” (1). As with the theme itself, the book’s audience is wide, encompassing art, architectural, and cultural historians who, like its editors and contributors, wish to “breathe a little social life in the Renaissance palace” (Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* [1995], qtd. in 1). This is certainly achieved insofar as the variety of topics examined and the richness of the scholarship, including ways of interpreting inventories, are concerned. It is less so, however, when it comes to providing the reader with topographical and especially visual aid, as not enough topographical references and too few and too small images are included, let alone plans or reconstruction drawings

(absent except in two essays). One wonders how much this is the authors' choice as opposed to editorial constraints. The ratio behind the geographical selection of the case studies, all concentrated with in upper-central to northeastern Italy, should also be contextualized and explained in the introduction. The virtual absence of Rome, only tangentially looked at in one essay, is noticeable in a book that aims to span until 1700. That said, a collection of such scholarship makes an important contribution to increasingly developing studies on material culture and indeed furnishes our understanding of domesticity in the early modern period.

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