



Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State

By Diana Norman

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Celebrating the Virgin Mary as both an object of religious affection and a focus of civic pride, artists of fourteenth-century Siena established for their city a vibrant tradition that continued into the early decades of the next century. Such celebratory portraits of the Virgin were also common in Siena's extensive subject territories, the contado. This richly illustrated book explores late medieval Siennese art—how it was created, commissioned, and understood by the citizens of Siena. Examining political, economic, and cultural relations between Siena and the contado, Diana Norman offers a new understanding of Marian art and its political function as an expression of civic ideology.

Drawing on extensive unpublished archives, Norman reconstructs the circumstances surrounding the commission of Marian art in the three most prestigious locations of fourteenth-century Siena: the cathedral, the Palazzo Pubblico, and the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. She analyzes similarly important commissions in the contado towns of Massa Marittima, Montalcino, and Montepulciano. Casting new light on such topics as the original site for the reliquary tomb of Saint Cerbone, patron saint of Massa Marittima, and the identity of the patrons of the Marian frescoes in the rural hermitage of San Leonardo al Lago, the author deepens our insight into the origins and meanings of Siennese art production of the late medieval period.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Because the Virgin Mary was adopted by medieval Siena as patron saint and protector of the city, a significant body of public art with Marian subjects was commissioned from such artists as Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini, Lippo Memmi, and Duccio. This volume examines 14th-century Marian art from Siena and its surrounding territory, emphasizing the artwork's production and use and incorporating new research into historical records. Aesthetic issues are also discussed, and beautiful reproductions accompany the text. With its scholarly detail and specialized focus, this book will be of interest mostly to academic and research collections. AKathryn Wekselman, Univ. of Cincinnati Lib. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

About the Author

Diana Norman is senior lecturer in art history at the Open University.

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