

Northern art. In addition, Fried successfully argues that these often grimacing faces give expression to “a Catholic universe not just teeming with, but interpenetrated by demonic agents” (154). As Fried himself admits, it is possible that not every reader will positively identify the faces that the author describes; however, it is convincingly argued that these suggestions of facelike forms are indeed “puzzling provocations” (135) that further entangle the viewer by demanding a response to the painting’s cues, prompting a close engagement with Savoldo’s glimmering swirling masses of fabric and rocky outcrops.

Fried ends his book with the line, “But this is speculation” (169), again acknowledging that some readers may not agree with what he calls “a highly personal attempt” (6) to grapple with the unusual features of Savoldo’s art. Although some may quibble with the details, ultimately Fried’s conclusions prompt reconsideration of an under appreciated artist and contend with “what was artistically possible in the imaginative universe of early sixteenth-century Venice and its environs” (133).

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*Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1800*. Judith W. Mann, ed.  
Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2022. 320 pp. \$50.

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Works of art, architecture, and objects of visual culture made by painting with, in, and on stone have been the focus of recent publications and exhibitions covering art and architecture from the ancient, medieval, and early modern periods. Although modest in number, these contributions pave the way for new inquiries into art practices, theories, and discourses that reveal art—and art history—as continuously generative.

Making an invaluable addition to this recent trend in the scholarship and the history of early modern art, *Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1800*, published for the occasion of a novel exhibition organized at the Saint Louis Museum of Art (SLAM), is the most accessible and comprehensive work to have been published on the topic of paintings on stone. Pan-European in its scope, the publication surveys notable artists, artworks, theorists, and contexts that shed light on the history of this medium. A stunning catalogue of images adorning the back is reason enough to pick up a copy, with its thoughtfully compiled list of over a hundred artworks, studiously annotated and with bibliographic sources, including some of the most fascinating and dexterous images this reader has encountered.

In 2005, motivated by a recent acquisition of a small late sixteenth-century mythological work painted on lapis lazuli by Giuseppe Casari, Judith W. Mann, the curator of early modern European art at SLAM, envisioned a pioneering exhibition that showcased the ocular experience offered by the extraordinary tacility and artistry of this and other

paintings created on stones. Mann's vision solidified in an exhibition, which ran from 20 February to 15 March 2022, and a catalogue that presents a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of paintings on stone, which will serve as the touchstone for future research on the subject.

The essays in the catalogue foreground the ways that images made on stones invite a close observation of the coming together of painting and sculpture; nature and artifice; theory and practice; subject and object. Situated between painting and sculpture, these artworks are technically and visually distinct from the traditional media, the qualities and characteristics of which were ardently debated by early modern artists, theoreticians, and humanists who professed the superiority of painting over sculpture, and vice versa, as part of the theoretical discourse known as the *paragone*. By their very nature, images on stone evidence ambitious instances of artistic virtuosity, competition, and experimentation that enrich our understanding of early modern art practices and theories, as Hana Seifertová explains in the introduction.

Artists approached stones differently at the beginning and at the end of the sixteenth century, an idea central to Mann's opening essay that foregrounds Sebastiano del Piombo and Rome in the development of the technique of painting on stone supports in the 1530s–40s. Building on recent scholarship, Mann convincingly shows that by the late sixteenth century stone no longer served as a receptacle for images, which were considered to be made eternal by their supports; stone became part of the painted subject as artists, first in Rome and then elsewhere in Europe, sought out pieces of geological matter for their distinct colors, patterns, and veins, and incorporated their physical properties into their compositions, often leaving the stone partly bare.

Fusing art and nature, early modern artists painted on local variations of limestone, marble, and slate, as well as semiprecious stones, like obsidian, lapis lazuli, agate, amethyst, and porphyry. The latter kinds of stones were made increasingly available in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in major centers such as Rome and Florence, thanks to the advances made in their procurement and transport, as Mario Casaburo demonstrates. While the early modern techniques of painting on stone compare to painting in oil on wood and canvas, the stages taken to prepare the stones were several and differed according to desired visual effects, observes Joan M. Reifsnnyder, citing Giorgio Vasari's contemporary treatise on art. That the resulting images are brilliant can be gathered from those grounding the case studies by Laura D. Gelfand, Nadia Groeneveld-Baadj, Elena Cenalmor Bruquetas, Joaneath Spicer, and Ivo Purš, who examine works by Italian, Flemish, French, Spanish, and German artists and situate them within relevant centers and contexts of their production: Northern and Italian Renaissance paintings of stone; Antwerp and discourses on art after iconoclasm; foreign influence and local practices in Madrid and Seville; discourses of collecting and the *Kunstkamera* in Germany; and alchemy at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, in Prague.

Lithic in its scale and breadth, *Paintings on Stone: Science and the Sacred 1530–1800* is a groundbreaking work that is sure to fascinate the general public while inspiring

future studies to chisel away at the densely stratified layers of meaning that fostered the development, dissemination, and collection of paintings on stone supports made between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.

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*Piero della Francesca and the Invention of the Artist*. Machtelt Brüggem Israëls. Renaissance Lives. London: Reaktion Books, 2020. 368 pp. £15.95.

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Israëls's multifaceted approach to Piero della Francesca's paintings and treatises is innovative and comprehensive. In her quest to demystify Piero's intentions, she interweaves every aspect of his work (iconography, sources, methods, etc.) with biographical and historical information. The arrangement of the chapters follows the chronology of Piero's progression from pupil to master to scientist. Before turning to his corpus, the author explores his roots in Borgo San Sepolcro.

In the section on the *Baptism of Christ*, Israëls proposes that the transparency of the water, caused by reflected light, signals the divine mystery of God manifested as light, based on an optical theory that differentiates reflected from refracted light. Diverging from Lavin, she identifies the men in Byzantine costume as priests and Levites rather than Magi. From her stylistic analysis of this painting, the author deduces that Piero learned from Gentile da Fabriano and Masolino.

The reader is then taken on Piero's many travels. During the Council of Ferrara-Florence, he would have encountered the costumes worn by the Byzantine participants, and would have seen paintings by Masaccio, Uccello, Domenico Veneziano, and Netherlandish artists. The author credits Netherlandish paintings as a source for Piero's techniques and the luminosity of his pictures. Another of Piero's stops was Rimini, where he portrayed Sigismondo Malatesta in a fresco once located in a tiny sacristy in the Tempio Malatestiano. Israëls's discussion of its original placement is enlightening, but impossible to visualize without an illustration.

A high point of the book is Israëls's analysis of the Legend of the True Cross cycle in Arezzo. She explains its narrative sequence, the significance of the costumes, and Piero's use of panel painting techniques to simulate reflections in the water. Innovations include the depiction of a constellation in a nighttime sky and arrows seemingly headed in the viewer's direction. The author's attempt to equate genre elements in two of the scenes to the devices of the rhetorician seems overwrought.

One of the small-scale paintings Israëls considers is the *Flagellation*. She argues that Piero represented Pilate both seated in the scene on the left and standing in the