

that conveyed the overarching ambitions of the cardinal patron who challenged the supremacy of Raphael's Chigi Chapel across the nave.

These erudite, jargon-free studies will engage students and scholars alike. They attest how much remains to be mined in archives, how new evidence spurs compelling analyses and revisions, and how the palimpsest that is Rome is eternally reframed and reconstructed.

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Gender, Space and Experience at the Renaissance Court: Performance and Practice at the Palazzo Te. Maria F. Maurer.

Visual and Material Culture, 1300–1700 9. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. 242 pp. €95.

The Palazzo Te in Mantua, built between 1525 and 1535 on what was originally an island at the edge of the city, was the creation of the architect and painter Giulio Romano. Constructed on the foundations of an older, more modest structure adjacent to the stables housing the celebrated horses of the Gonzaga family, the palace functioned initially as a suburban retreat for Federico II Gonzaga, the first Duke of Mantua. The fame of the building spread quickly. A scant two years after the Te's completion, Sebastiano Serlio praised its architecture as a perfect mixture of nature and artifice, and Giorgio Vasari, in his 1550 "Life of Giulio Romano," lauded the palace's interior images as exemplary of a dazzling inventiveness. Modern historians have tended to discuss the palace's architecture in terms of its deviations from classical norms and have explicated its complex and diverse interior decorations in iconographical, political, biographical, and/or psychological terms. In her recent monograph on the Te, Maria Maurer focuses on the reactions that Renaissance visitors may have had to the building and its decorations, and how these responses may have been informed by contemporary attitudes toward gender identity, courtly decorum, historical circumstances, and individual and collective experiences.

Maurer's first chapter is devoted to the historical and theoretical foundations of her work. The primary sources from which she draws include contemporary Renaissance chronicles, letters, and courtesy books, with particular attention given to Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* and his concept of male *sprezzatura* and female *sprezzata purità*. Based on these sources, Maurer characterizes the Mantuan court as highly artificial and self-conscious, an environment in which participants were constantly engaged in enacting and evaluating their masculine and feminine roles. In order to reconstruct how this self-consciousness might have informed contemporary reactions to, and activities within the Te, Maurer invokes Judith Butler and

Elizabeth Gross's theory of gender as performative and flexible, as well as Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's views of public and private spaces as being polyvalent and socially determined and determinative. Given this theoretical framework, Maurer envisions the Te and its images as active agents in the formal and informal courtly rituals that took place within the suburban palace's walls.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the festivities held at the Te in conjunction with visits to Mantua by Emperor Charles V in 1530 and 1532. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the palace's architecture and images may have been employed by the Mantuan court and its guests to project or transgress socially defined gender roles. The fourth chapter looks at the larger impact of the Te elsewhere in Europe, with particular emphasis on Giulio's combination of the architecturally refined and the rustic, and his extraordinary creation of an all-encompassing, disorienting environment in the Sala dei Giganti. In respect to the latter, Maurer examines the concept of the monstrous in the Renaissance and its embodiment in several hybrid sculptural/architectural projects, including the Grotto des Pins at Fontainebleau, the Hell Mouth at Bomarzo, and the colossal Appennino at Pratolino. The fifth chapter returns to the palace proper at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, examining its role in the entry rituals of four Gonzaga brides: Margherita Farnese (1581), Eleonora de' Medici (1584), Margherita of Savoy (1608), and Caterina de' Medici (1619). In each of the four cases, the impending union was not only politically charged, but also complicated by the questionable fidelity and potency of the groom, circumstances seen to have engendered a complicated range of responses, especially in regard to the fresco decorations in the Sala dei Cavalli and Sala di Psiche. In an epilogue, Maurer briefly surveys the fate of the Te from the Sack of Mantua in 1630 to the present day, before returning to her central argument "that the Renaissance self was performed through corporeal experiences of space, images, and objects" (229).

The author's open-ended, gender-oriented approach allows for a single image to provoke two or more quite different, even contradictory, reactions at the same time, depending on the circumstances and the experiences and gender of the viewer. For example, she suggests that for one set of observers, the horses portrayed in the Sala dei Cavalli may have been interpreted as a reference to the "noble lineage of the Gonzaga" (66) and the virile, unbridled masculinity of the ruler, but others may have seen them as inert symbols of his impotency. Similarly, the bawdy, sexually charged image of Pasiphae and the bull in the Sala dei Psiche may have fostered a homosocial bond between Federico and his male guests at the banquet and ball held in honor of Charles V in 1530; offered a model of female agency for court ladies at the same event; or, in Margherita Farnese's case, provided a metaphor for her imminent transformation from virgin to wife.

Maurer's use of primary sources alongside theory is admirable, although she does not address the question of whether Castiglione's ideal courtier, who plays an important role in her speculations, is a reflection of an internalized reality, a literary creation, or a combination of the two. More fundamentally, few would disagree with Maurer's basic

premise concerning the circumstantial nature of interpretation. Regardless of the intentions of the artist and his patron, the manner in which the palace and the images within its walls were understood and used were fluid and ultimately determined by the beholder. Of course, the notion of the malleability of interpretation is also applicable to the discipline of historical analysis itself, as Maurer's decision to focus on gender and her use of the present-day argot of feminist theory illustrate. The questions historians choose to ask and the answers that they find convincing are themselves subject to historical context.

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La "donazione de Mabilia" nella cattedrale di Montepeloso: Nuove prospettive di ricerca. Franco Benucci and Matteo Calzone.

Il mito e la storia 15. Padova: Esedra Editrice, 2019. x + 180 pp. €27.

While the COVID pandemic keeps research travel on hold, the scholarly art historical itinerary presented in the series "Il mito e la storia" leads us through traditions surrounding Mantegna from Northern Italy to an unexpected location of a hill town in Basilicata. Montepeloso, renamed Irsina in 1895, keeps a donation including the marble statue of Saint Euphemia with her lion on a rotating movable platform attributed to Mantegna.

Stylistic attribution was supported by a Latin source rediscovered in the Vatican archives three decades ago, the 1592 "Vita divae Euphemiae Virginis et Martiris" by the archdeacon of Montepeloso Pasquale Verrone. It records a certain Roberto De Mabilia who had been responsible in 1454 for the sending of the statue from the Veneto to Basilicata. The same year saw also the arrival of a Madonna and Child, a Donatellian Crucifix, a Veronese red marble baptismal font, a column, and a reliquary with relics of the martyr's arm. The life-size statue shows the saint with one hand in the lion's jaws in remembrance of her martyrdom suffered in 304 CE. Euphemia was thrown to wild beasts after her refusal of a pagan sacrifice; the pose of the gingerly lion resonates with Mantegna's painted *Euphemia* in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples.

Roberto de Mabilia had moved from Montepeloso to Padua, where the prelate became a wealthy notary and rector of San Daniele. For the enduring commemoration of his own role in the appointment of Montepeloso as a bishopric by a papal bull of 1452, Mabilia commissioned the sculptural program in the North. This is where the issue of Mantegna as designer and/or maker of the sculptures comes in. Disentangling the historical, art historical, technical, and connoisseurial questions around Mabilia's donation, the collection of articles sails under the flag of the Centro Studi Robertus de Apulia di Irsina and the Università di Padova's eminent Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità. The broad spectrum