

Eikón Imago

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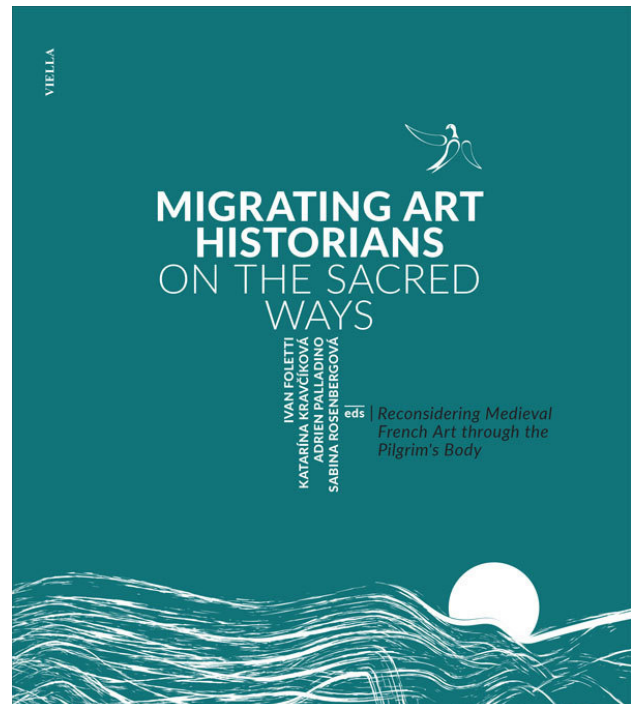
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COMPLUTENSE

Foletti, Ivan, Katarína Kravčíková, Adrien Palladino and Sabina Rosenbergová, eds., *Migrating Art Historians on the Sacred Ways*. Brno: Masaryk University, and Rome: Viella, 2018 (Convivia 2) [ISBN: 978-88-3313-105-4].

The book *Migrating Art Historians on the Sacred Ways* starts with a quotation from Hans Belting: “To understand with all the senses, and not only with theories. To understand with the whole body medieval art which is so different and still so close.” Belting’s words are an invitation to art historical “field work”. As such they are programmatic for the project the book presents: a walk of about 1.540 kilometers, by a team of art historians – students and researchers – from Masaryk University in Brno, in spring 2017, from Lausanne via Genève, Lyon, Le Puy-en-Velay, Conques, Clermont-Ferrand, Nevers, Orléans, Tours and Rennes (inter alia) to the Mont-Saint-Michel. It was a journey on foot, in daily stages, only interrupted by three longer stays in Conques, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire and at the Mont-Saint-Michel. The travel route followed three medieval pilgrimage paths to Santiago de Compostela: the Via Podiensis, Via Lemovicensis and Via Turonensis.

The research interest was double: Does the activity of walking – as a day-long and steady bodily experience – change our perception of places, buildings and artefacts? And can reflecting on the bodily experience of walking and on movement in general be a possible instrument for art historical research? The methodological framework for this approach is provided by the “sensual turn” in art history with studies by Alexej Lidov, Éric Palazzo, Bissera Pentcheva and Herbert Kessler. Research perspectives from art history and cultural anthropology meet, when it comes to exploring the role movement plays for our understanding of the world (Ivan Foletti, Introduction). At the meantime it remains clear that reconstructing the perception of a medieval pilgrim is an impossible goal – neither by the personal experiences of the “modern pilgrims” nor by means of sources or object evidence (s. the final contribution by Karolina Foletti). But this does not make the project any less relevant: Much more important are the questions arising from this new and fascinating approach – an approach based on the idea of a moving individual: the medieval pilgrim.

The volume reassembles contributions by students, Ph.D. students and researchers who participated in the journey and/or in the workshops held during the three longer stays. It has six chapters: I) The Sacred Landscape of Medieval Pilgrims; II) Liminal Zones and Pilgrimage Churches; III) Entering Sacred Space; IV) Materializing the Sacred; V) Traveling, Seeing, Dream-



ing; and VI) Migrating Art Historians a Living Experience. Each chapter is introduced by a programmatic statement: on the “Sacred Landscape of the Medieval Pilgrim” (Martín Lešák), “Liminality” (Ivan Foletti), “The Visitor’s Inner Experience” (Pavla Tichá), “Relics, Reliquaries and Shrines” (Cynthia Hahn and Adrien Palladino) and on “Site-bound Holiness” (Michele Bacci). These are followed by a series of case studies on single monuments or objects. In the last chapter Karolina Foletti takes a look back to the project as a whole – as a teaching as well as a research experience.

According to the project design, the volume focuses on French monuments and artefacts from the 11th to the 13th centuries – a perspective that is widened and reflected by contributions on related object groups in other European regions (Stefano D’Ovidio on the Bronze Door of Monte Sant’Angelo on Mount Gargano) or, in the case of chapter V, on other concepts of medieval pilgrimage: the sea-routes from Venice to the Holy Land (Michele Bacci, Angela Schiffhauer, Vesna Scepanovic, Gianvito Campobasso, Argri Dermitzaki and Sofia Zoitou). In the discussions of landscapes, paths, places and artefacts, the materiality of the sacred is set in relation to the spatial

practice of pilgrimage or – in secular terms – movement. Special attention is given to liminal spaces, spaces of transition, and also to questions of accessibility of spaces and objects. The above-mentioned chapters are conceived as a slow process of rapprochement: from the distant view of the place to the close-up of the single object.

The volume can be read linearly, but also in a place- and object-specific way: the reader can follow a chosen place, monument, object or object group through several chapters. The Mont-Saint-Michel is discussed in two contributions by Sabina Rosenbergová (chapters I and IV) and closely linked to the sanctuary on Monte Gargano dedicated to Saint Michael (contribution by Stefano D'Ovidio, chapter II). Another example are texts dealing with cult images: Ivan Foletti's text on Saint Faith, Sabina Rosenbergová on the image of Saint Michael at the Mont-Saint-Michel, and the contributions dealing with cult images of the Virgin as a related object group (the texts by Katarína Kravčíková, Anna Kelblová and Tereza Kučerová on Le Puy, Clermont-Ferrand and Charité-sur-Loire) are closely entangled. In his contribution on Saint Faith Ivan Foletti explores the perception of the famous cult image in medieval times and beyond.

During the group's stay at Conques an experiment was carried out, inspired by Bissera Pentcheva's studies of the light reflecting surfaces of medieval icons, in which it was possible to observe how the statue's metal surface interacts with candle light.

The project as a whole opens up many new perspectives for art historical research and research-oriented teaching, with a special interest to the concept of sensory, synesthetic perception. The volume is beautifully designed and follows a special photographic concept aiming to capture the object/monument in its local, spatial context and in relation to other objects or persons. Many pictures try to take the project specific pilgrim's perspective. In times in which traditional art historical object photography is increasingly questioned, this is an inspiring statement.

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