archives, more from printed sources, supports her conclusions. The studies of the women of Leiden and Cologne are firmly set within these cities' wider economic history. A short comparative section, which treats Lier, Douai and Frankfurt am Main, further indicates the usefulness of Howell's model under a variety of economic systems. *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* will become essential reading for historians of economic change and for those attempting to reconstruct women's past.

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Rona Goffen. *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice. Bellini, Titian, and the Franciscans*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. P. xvii, 285

Piety and Patronage is something of a rarity in art historical studies: an interdisciplinary study by an author who is equally knowledgeable about theology, church history, civic politics and family history as she is about art history. This is a study of the historical contexts of three altarpieces in the Franciscan church of Santa Maria dei Frari: Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child with Saints Peter, Nicholas, Benedict and Mark*; Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*; and Titian, *Pesaro Madonna*. The narrow focus on just three pictures allows the author to discuss each systematically and exhaustively in terms of iconography (Franciscan piety) and patronage (mostly of the Pesaro family), and how the one affects the other. Goffen explains in the opening paragraph of the preface how she hopes that each of these microcosms will encapsulate a larger cultural reality:

The church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice is a microcosm. Within its walls it contains, quite literally, the history of Venetian Renaissance art. At the same time, the history of the Frari encapsulates that of the Friars Minor, from their thirteenth-century beginnings to the division of the order in 1517. The theological issues and the compassionate spirituality represented by the altars and decoration of the Frari represent the particular concerns and the character of the Franciscan order while also alluding to the special relationship between church and state in Renaissance Venice. All of this is embodied in the altarpieces painted for the Frari by Giovanni Bellini, the greatest master of the fifteenth century in Venice, and by Titian, the sublime genius of sixteenth-century painting.... The images of the Madonna were intended to convey at once several interrelated meanings, both sacred and civic; and the ways in which they do so are also related. It is as though there were a silent colloquy among them, a discourse about theology and spirituality, about

the Franciscan order and the Catholic church, about the individual family and the state – and about style and content as well.

The scope of her investigation is certainly impressive. Although some of her discussion is simply a sound summary of scholarship (notably the sections on the Immaculate Conception), in other parts she has contributed original material to areas other than art history: the family history of the Pesaro family and the institutional history of S.M. dei Frari have never before been mapped so extensively. Historians, especially those interested in Venice, may thus find material pertinent to their own work even if they have no need or little interest in art history. The amount of unpublished archival material is certainly impressive, not only for the variety of information provided but also for the diversity of fonts. This kind of archival search and assimilation is rarely attempted by art historians and should often be left to historians and professional archivists. That Goffen has overcome the difficulties of this territory has certainly impressed the present reviewer, who once endured similar ardours and thence chose to abandon the archives.

The scope of Goffen's investigation has also produced its problems, because at times it tends to burden these three paintings with an excessive cultural freight. To what extent can any single painting of a Madonna and Child simultaneously embody complex theological debates, institutional relations (church and state; Conventuals and Observants) and family history? By reducing her discussion to only three paintings (albeit the three greatest ones in the Frari), she has forced them to carry the full weight of her themes. Why are we not introduced to other paintings in the Frari such as those by Vittore Carpaccio (*Coronation of the Virgin*), Bartolommeo Vivarini (*St. Mark enthroned with Saints*), Bernardino Licinio (*Madonna and Child with Saints*) and Gioseppe Salviati (*Presentation of the Virgin*)? Why are these paintings excluded from the "silent colloquy" and "discourse about theology and spirituality" that Bellini and Titian are engaged in? Admittedly the artistic quality of these are of a lesser order, but Goffen analyzes art as a cultural artifact, and not as an aesthetic object.

Art historians will be indebted to Goffen for a wide variety of insights. For example, she has established the presence of the Immaculate Conception as a theme in Bellini's altarpiece and has shown its significance for the Franciscans at this particular time (1488) and for the Pesaro family in general. Also her suggestion that the saints in this altarpiece portray the psychological, instead of the physiognomic, reality of the Pesaro brothers who commissioned the work is especially brilliant and completely original. She has shown us exactly how Titian's Pesaro altarpiece is a fusion of three artistic traditions – the *sacra conversazione*, the funerary monument and the votive picture – and has clarified the political ramifications and even dangers

that Jacopo Pesaro risked by having himself shown as the (former) captain of a papal regatta. We also learn for the first time which other members of the Pesaro family were shown as donors by Titian.

As with most important books, one always wants more and often different things than those generously provided. What the present reviewer wanted, but could rarely find, was a discussion of how piety and patronage affected the visible results that the artist produced. This book is more about history than art, more about the patron and the contemporary audience than the artist. In looking at art as a cultural product wherein the user is given more importance than the producer, Goffen has had to reconcile herself with the inherent shortcoming of her method and exclude from discussion any serious consideration of the creative process, in other words, the artist's contribution. For example, was it Bellini, one of the Pesaro family or a Franciscan at the Frari who thought of alluding to the Immaculate Conception in the sacristy altarpiece? Without any direct evidence, Goffen has had to rely on the most tenuous of threads. Nicolo' Pesaro, one of Bellini's patrons, was a *provedator* in the war against Ferrara, a papal state, and a negotiator in the peace treaty negotiations. From this scrap of information, she tentatively suggests that Nicolo' was aware of Sixtus IV's active interest in the Immaculata and hence "meant to please Sixtus by thus honoring the Immaculate Virgin – especially in the aftermath of papal displeasure with Venice." This is indeed a possibility, but I wonder whether Sixtus would have even been able to recognize the compliment since it was so obscurely stated that only this year has it been discovered. This should not be taken as a criticism of the author – Goffen analyzed the data, much of it new, to the fullest extent – but a problem inherent to the material itself, since there is simply insufficient information about the patrons to allow any reasonable understanding of their motivations in commissioning the various paintings. The most important information is contained by the paintings themselves and this presents an irreconcilable dilemma: how do we separate the patron's intent from the artist's? How much does the design and interpretation of the subject depend upon the location in a Franciscan church? and how much depends upon its function in a private chapel? Goffen occasionally confronts these issues but the results are (and must be) problematic. For example, she describes Giovanni Bellini's other Franciscan works (*Coronation of the Virgin*, *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, and the *S. Giobbe altarpiece*) in this way: "In working on these compositions, Bellini learned much about Franciscan sensibility and Franciscan spirituality. Both his knowledge and his sympathy shine forth in the results – not only in their content but in the compassionate spirituality they convey." There does seem to be a quiet humanity in Bellini's people, and this does indeed resemble Franciscan ideals, but what exactly

is the relationship? Are we to understand that Bellini endowed his Franciscan paintings with a "Franciscan sensibility" and "compassionate spirituality" but not his other works? Or did his contact with Franciscans fundamentally alter the way he depicted man and religious narrative? Neither position is defensible, and Goffen is much too careful to try. She has simply stated a feeling, one that is probably correct, which cannot be proven. This is true of the whole issue of piety and patronage: it is not so much how they affect each other, as how they affect the artist and hence how the artist reflects his own concerns at the same time as those of the patron and church. Another example of this dilemma is the discussion of those controversial columns in Titian's Pesaro Madonna. Iconographers often yield to the temptation to load paintings with more meaning than they were ever intended to bear, but such is not usually the case with Goffen. Here is an exception. She has given to these two columns a surfeit of significance by making them the "pillar of cloud" described in Ecclesiasticus as the throne of the Immaculate Virgin and at the same time interpreting them as symbols "of victory and of dominion over land and sea, over peoples of every nation," and simultaneously as symbols of the Madonna as "Gate of Heaven" and even "the gateway of Venice, the city of the Virgin." Even these massive columns cannot support this weight. The mosaics in the apse vault of Bellini's altarpiece must sustain a similar interpretive load. According to Goffen, Bellini chose the medium of mosaics to recall the Basilica di San Marco and hence to serve as "a reference to the fealty of the donors to the Republic, comparable in this sense to the modern display of a national flag." The problem in both instances is not so much how to interpret the iconography of architecture but whether or not there is any iconography to interpret. Since the frame of reference for this book is theological, she must assume that forms have a religious meaning, but in making that assumption she has excluded another possibility: that forms might be chosen as part of an artistic solution. Goffen learned to interpret architectural symbolism in this way from her mentor, David Rosand, whose seminal works have inspired a generation of Venetian specialists (including this reviewer); however, Rosand was as attentive to artistic as to iconographic problems, to style as to culture, and always tried to balance one against the other. Undoubtedly Goffen can do the same (her discussion of Bellini's altarpiece as a pastophory proves this), but has chosen instead to focus only on the historical, and not the artistic, context. In so doing, she has provided us with some invaluable data and interpretive tools to understand the art of Renaissance Venice.

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