



CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean
Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova



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Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean

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Rome on the Borders
Visual Cultures During the
Carolingian Transition

edited by **Chiara Bordino, Chiara Croci**
& **Vedran Sulovsky**

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Rome on the Borders

Visual Cultures During the Carolingian Transition

Chiara Bordino & Chiara Croci

Liberated from Byzantine control and having rejected the Lombard claims, since the late-eighth century Rome stood in an intermediate but uncomfortable position between the Byzantine and Carolingian empires. The position of the city and, indeed, of the pontifical See, on the European chessboard during the Carolingian transition has been recognized and largely investigated by historians and archeologists in recent decades.

Their research has made it possible to view Rome at the heart of broader early medieval dynamics¹. From the standpoint of visual cultures, however, we note that Carolingian Rome has tended to remain enclosed in a self-referential cage, despite the undeniable contributions to a broadening of perspectives advanced by some art historians².

This view harks back in a well rooted historiographical tradition discussed in this volume by Ivan Foletti and Sabina Rosenbergová. This tradition sets Carolingian Rome in a dynamic involving the arts of the Middle Ages more in general, characterized by continuous “renaissances” and “decays”. The view of the Carolingian arts in Rome shaped by Richard Krautheimer rests on this premise³: an “early Christian renaissance” driven by papal pressures in response to the *renovatio imperii* promoted by the Frankish sovereigns. Seventy years after Krautheimer’s seminal study, we have to recognize the durability of the author’s brilliant reading, which successfully resisted not only promising initiatives of revision in the 1970s⁴, but also the arguments raised by critics in recent decades⁵.

To focus on important recent advances concerning part of the visual culture of Carolingian Rome⁶ and to connect these developments, which up to now have been unrelated, we propose to reignite the discussion of these topics at a new starting point. Picking up one of the items of the agenda for the study of early medieval painting in Rome presented by John Osborne two decades ago, this volume – issued from the conference *Rome in a Global World: Visual Cultures During the Carolingian Transition* (Brno, 14th–15th October 2019) – proceeds from the very idea of looking across borders at Rome’s artistic production in the Carolingian era. By “borders”, we mean historiographical, disciplinary, methodological, geo-political and, to a certain extent, chronological.

After the challenge to the concept of Carolingian Renaissance in Rome articulated in Foletti and Rosenbergová’s historiographical essay, Andrea Verardi looks at Carolingian Rome using a broader lens. Drawing on the *Liber Pontificalis* and pontifical letters, Verardi analyzes the papal communication strategies put in place to set the Holy See on the European political chessboards during the period that saw the transition from the Langobard presence in Italy to the arrival of the Franks. The following contribution, by Ernesto Mainoldi, studies texts and images in the Bibles of Charles the Bald, deepening our understanding of the “Romanness” of the Frankish sovereigns. In so doing, Mainoldi makes it possible to clarify the role of political and artistic culture in their relations with the Roman Curia.

Again, on the basis of written sources, the articles by Dirk Krausmüller and Chiara Bordino breach not only disciplinary borders, but even the geopolitical boundaries confining studies of the Carolingian visual culture of Rome. Krausmüller addresses the polyvalent relations between miracles, interior virtues, apparitions, and visible images of the saints in hagiographical texts written by Methodius, Constantinople’s future iconophile patriarch, during his Roman sojourn early in the ninth century. Bordino reviews texts discussing the legitimacy of the veneration of saints and their images, in this way framing the position of Rome with respect to the complex debate occurring in the Carolingian and Byzantine worlds.

The contributions by Philipp Winterhager and Chiara Croci provide a counterpoint to the studies devoted to text and manuscripts. Starting from Rome’s monuments, Winterhager and Croci look beyond the city to consider the impact of Rome’s politics and artistic practices in the Lombard, Carolingian and Byzantine regions, and vice versa. Winterhager investigates the diffusion of a particular architectonic form, showing how the three-apse basilica plan, already established in the Byzantine world, spread from the Rome of Pope Hadrian I to Carolingian Rhaetia. Again, starting from an apparently

Roman question—that of the martyr narrative—Crocì seeks to frame the martyrial cycles in the transept of Santa Prassede in a larger context that considers the role of Roman models and their impact. Crocì's study also introduces the question of Rome's position in the iconoclast struggles.

These attempts to look at Rome across historiographical, disciplinary, chronological, and geopolitical borders makes it possible to approach other urban contexts with a fresh view. This is what Maria Lidova does in her article dedicated to a quintessential “Roman” iconography: that of *Maria Regina*. Focusing on the developments of the late eighth century, Lidova shows new facets of an iconographic type with a long tradition in the city but the new iterations of which were modified according to the needs and wishes of patrons. Martin F. Lešák's article, in turn, takes a fresh approach to the basilica of Santa Susanna, rebuilt by Pope Leo III at the end of the eighth century. Drawing on studies of the Roman liturgy, especially on the stationary liturgy, carried on by such scholars as Chavasse, Baldwin, Dyer, and Romano, Lešák provides new glimpses on the lost mosaic and its possible link to painting fragments discovered three decades ago in a sarcophagus in a chapel beside the church.

The volume concludes with a significant diptych devoted to the great project of Pope Paschal I, the basilica of Santa Prassede, and in particular to its presbyterial space organized around the crypt, to which 2300 relics were brought from the catacombs. In an exemplary methodological effort bridging the study of the architecture and fragments of liturgical furnishing with analysis of the documents of modern restorations, Antonella Ballardini and Maurizio Caperna offer a reconstruction of the apsidal arrangement, which reconsiders the use of space and thus, also, the conditions of visibility of the grand

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- 1 Among the more recent contributions we can mention here at least: *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, Julia M. H. Smith, Donald Bullough eds, Leiden 2000; Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: a New Cultural History, 500–1000*, Oxford 2005; *Roma Felix. Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, Éamonn Ó Carragáin ed., Aldershot 2007; *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100*, Thomas Noble, Julia M. H. Smith eds, Cambridge 2008; Thomas Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, Philadelphia 2009 (by the same author, it's impossible not to mention also his former *The Republic of St. Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825*, Philadelphia 1984); Clemens Gantner, Rutger Kramer, “Lateran Thinking: Building an Idea of Rome in the Carolingian Empire”, *Viator*, XLVII/3 (2016), pp.1–26; *Transformations of Romanness. Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, Walter Pohl et al. eds, Berlin 2018. New perspectives are heralded by the imminent publication of the volume *After Charlemagne. Carolingian Italy and its Rulers*, Clemens Gantner ed., (Cambridge University Press).
 - 2 See for example John Osborne, “The Artistic Culture of Early Medieval Rome: a Research Agenda for the 21st Century”, *Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, XLVIII/2 (2000/2001), pp. 693–711; *Rome across Time and Space, Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas c. 500–1400*, Claudia Bolgia ed, Cambridge 2011; Manfred Luchterhandt, “Rom und Aachen: die Karolinger und der päpstliche Hof um 800”, in *Orte der Macht. Essays*, Frank Pohle, Peter van den Brink eds, Aachen 2014, pp. 104–113; a perspective of opening of the history of the Carolingian arts in Rome characterize also the seminars “Grata più delle stelle. Pasquale I e la Roma del suo tempo” conceived by the University of Roma Tre; La Sapienza, University of Rome and the University of Barcelona (see contributions by Ballardini/Caperna and Bordi/Mancho in this volume).
 - 3 Richard Krautheimer, “The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture”, *The Art Bulletin*, XXIV (1942), pp. 1–27.
 - 4 *Roma e l'età carolingia*, atti delle giornate di studio (3–8 maggio 1976), Roma 1976; Mario d'Onofrio, *Roma e Aquisgrana*, Rome 1980.
 - 5 Valentino Pace, “La ‘felix culpa’ di Richard Krautheimer: Roma, Santa Prassede e la ‘rinascenza carolingia’”, in *Ecclesiae Urbis*, atti del congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma (IV–X secolo), (4–10 settembre 2000, Roma), Federico Guidobaldi, Alessandra G. Guidobaldi eds, Vatican City 2002, vol. I, pp. 65–72; Caroline J. Goodson, “Revival and Reality: The Carolingian Renaissance in Rome and the Basilica of S. Prassede”, *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, XX/1 (2006), pp. 163–192; Carles Mancho, “Pasquale I, santa Prassede, Roma e Santa Prassede”, *Arte Medievale*, ser. 4, I (2010/2011), pp. 31–48; Catherine Carver McCurrach “Renovatio Reconsidered: Richard Krautheimer and the Iconography of Architecture”, *Gesta*, L/1 (2011), pp. 41–69.
 - 6 Beside the already mentioned works by Luchterhandt and Osborne, we can evoke here at least the writings by Caroline Goodson, and in particular her *The Rome of Pope Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817–824*, Cambridge 2010; as well as those by Erik Thunø, gathered principally in his two monographs *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition*, New York 2015 and *Image and Relic: Mediating the Sacred in Early Medieval Rome*, Rome 2002.

mosaic and pictorial scenario of Paschal 1. The same subject is central to the article of Giulia Bordi and Carles Mancho, who provide a new reading of the triumphal arch of Santa Prassede, including an insightful comparison with the arch of Constantine. The authors thus demonstrate how the intertwinement of images in the presbyterial zone reveals the martyrs' arrival in the heart of the Paschal 1's New Jerusalem.

The covid-19 pandemic, which blocked many scholars' access to resources, deprived this volume of two important contributions presented at the conference: Erik Thunø's keynote lecture, "The World in a Box? The Sancta Sanctorum Treasure and Global Art History" and Peter Seiler's "Arguments About Miraculous Images: The Libri Carolini, Nicaea and Pope Hadrian 1". We hope that the editorial effort – for which we owe thanks to Vedran Sulovsky, to the team of Convivium and to all the peer reviewers for their invaluable observations – succeeded in surmounting these difficulties and that the volume we are putting forth will rekindle the debate on the role of Rome in the artistic culture of the Carolingian era.

