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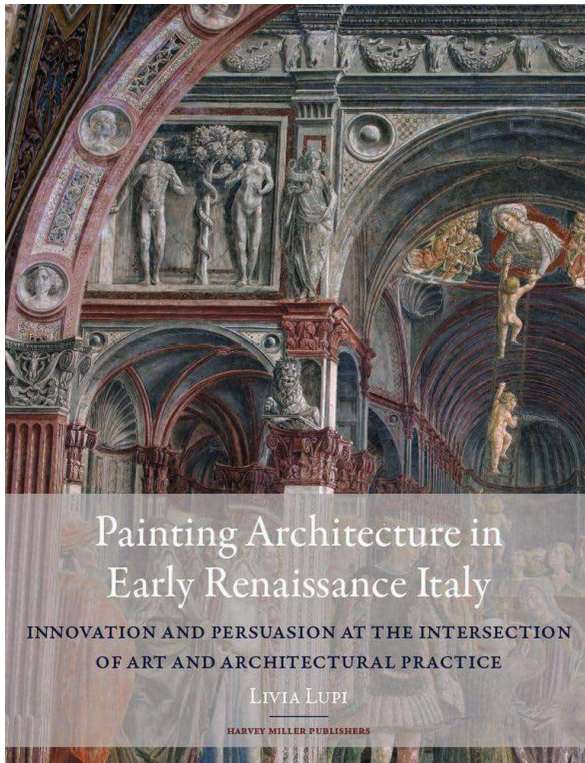
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- 1 The depiction of architecture in painting occupies a somewhat ambiguous position within the history of art. For painting specialists, architecture is rarely attributed with significant iconographic meaning and often serves merely as a backdrop for the narrative. Since it cannot be physically measured or studied, painted architecture has frequently been regarded by architectural historians as inferior to real, constructed architecture. Although the painted architecture of the Italian Renaissance is most commonly seen through the lens of perspectival visualisation of pictorial space, Livia Lupi's *Painting Architecture in Early Renaissance Italy* provides a valuable alternative perspective. It considers Renaissance painted architecture as a means of communication and architectural expression of the emerging artist, establishing a dialectical relationship with actual built architecture.
- 2 While previous publications on the representation of architecture in Italian Renaissance painting have mainly concentrated on the late Quattrocento and High Renaissance artistic production, Lupi's chronological focus is on the first half of the Quattrocento. The book features three exceptional fresco cycles, located in different Italian regions, serving various types of sites and existing within distinct social contexts. By selecting these three cycles – all notable for their prominent and innovative architectural design – Lupi emphasises the diverse functions of painted architecture: it demonstrates the painter's architectural skill, adds a symbolic layer to the iconographic narrative, and acts as an experimental stylistic and typological resource, often influencing later developments in (constructed) architectural history.
- 3 In the first chapter, Lupi examines the architectural setting in Masolino's fresco cycle in the baptistery at Castiglione Olona (1435), which depicts the life of St. John the Baptist. She argues that the architectural features reflect the intellectual and antiquarian ambitions of its patron, Branda Castiglione. Subtle references to antique architecture are made in the fictional painted setting, creating an ideal *all'antica*

environment. This is contrasted with depictions of outdoor natural settings, referencing contemporary textual traditions such as Pizolpasso's encomium of Castiglione in 1432 (included in English translation as an appendix to the book). As a result, Masolino's landscapes, architecture, and ornamentation contribute to a dialogue between imagined architectural structures and the local setting, reshaping the patron's cultural identity.

- 4 The second case study explores perhaps the most vibrant example of painted architecture from the early Quattrocento: the Pellegrinaio at Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, created between 1441 and 1444 by Vecchietta, Priamo della Quercia, and Domenico di Bartolo, and commissioned by the rector of the Sienese hospital, Giovanni di Francesco Buzzichelli. Since the fresco cycle depicts the legendary founding and history of the hospital itself, the architectural setting reflects how the institution aimed to present itself within the urban fabric of the city, and as a performative entity. Lupi explains how the three painters combined their knowledge of the latest advancements in architectural practice and antique structures to invent and suggest new architectural and decorative solutions. The fusion of innovative architectural ideas with reinterpretations of existing Sienese buildings highlights the potential of painted architecture. This sense of invention, variation, and typological experimentation is especially significant before the standardisation of the Vitruvian orders by Serlio. It reminds us that the developments seen in painted architecture are interconnected with those happening on the building site, by Michelozzo, Donatello, or Brunelleschi.
- 5 A papal commission is chosen as the third case study, featuring Fra Angelico's Niccoline Chapel in the Vatican Palace (1448–1450). The two fresco cycles, focusing on the lives of Saint Stephen and Saint Laurence, have previously attracted considerable scholarly attention, especially for Leon Battista Alberti's role in the architectural programme during his cartographical project for Nicholas V. Lupi shifts this discussion by concentrating on Fra Angelico's individual contribution to the architectural features of the frescoes. She highlights the symbolic and narrative aspects of the architectural distinction between the two cycles, portraying a geographical as well as a chronological shift. By intertwining architectural setting and narrative structure to create new layers of meaning, the painter's architectural knowledge and imagination are cleverly utilised to address the legitimacy of Rome within the historical context of Nicholas V's papacy.
- 6 Lupi's book makes a fresh contribution to the growing interdisciplinary field of painted architecture. Its three-part structure allows her to examine how the depiction of architecture in early Renaissance painting adds multiple layers of meaning, not only to the narrative but also to the transdisciplinary role of the painter and the importance of architectural knowledge for the patron's prestige. One of the most compelling aspects of the book is how painted architecture, from economic and structural perspectives, anticipates later innovations seen in the works of Giuliano da Sangallo, Peruzzi, or Bramante. The link between these fresco cycles and other arts — such as decorative sculpture, architectural drawing, or goldsmithing — is briefly mentioned in an epilogue, leaving readers eager for a fuller exploration of the interdisciplinary connections of these artists. It also shows that Lupi's engaging book has sparked new research questions in the emerging field of painted architecture.

AUTHORS

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