Review of The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400-1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticaries

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dominance is accompanied with the muted warning of the dangers that accompanied unlimited power. These messages are imbedded in Rubens's pointed recreation of the myths of Perseus, Jason, and Nessus.

Georgievská-Shine and Silver also construct two further chapters from the assessment of the Dutch master's contributions to the La Torre collection. In the first, they elicit the lessons connected with the power of art and its ultimate defeat by the overriding dominance of death. This philosophical terrain was expressed to Felipe IV by Rubens's reanimation of the myths of Orpheus and Eurydice, Mercury and Argus, and Daedalus and Icarus. In the second chapter, the authors deal with the issues of flawed strength, stupid courage, cunning and intelligence in the service of peace, and the overriding influence of fate on human affairs as they were represented in the Dutch painter's treatment of the well-known stories of Mercury, Phaeton, Fortuna, and Psyche.

The last section of this book deals with the influence of Diego Velázquez, who, as Felipe IV's court painter, had a seminal influence on the arrangement of the La Torre collection and on its completion with a number of his own works. As with Rubens's works, the authors assess the smaller but highly significant circle of paintings that Velázquez contributed to the hunting lodge's gallery. In the first of a series of chapters, they compare Velázquez's canvases that portray the classical literary masters, Aesop and Menippus, with Rubens's treatment of the Greek philosophers, Democritus and Heraclitus. In the second, they study the remarkable series of La Torre paintings in which Velázquez presents stunning images of royal figures engaged in the serious business of the hunt, the officials who served them, and the dwarfs who entertained them. In the third, the authors compare Rubens's classical hunting scenes with Velázquez's massive portrayals in photographic detail of the Habsburg king's massive hunting expeditions, which seemed a kind of spectator sport.

Since some of the paintings of the La Torre collection have been lost and many dispersed to other museum and private depositories, Georgievská-Shine and Silver have performed a virtual "labor of Hercules" in determining which of Rubens's and Velázquez's were displayed in La Torre de la Parada and in tracing their convoluted and often unhappy subsequent histories. For want of a written program for La Torre's paintings and with only Velázquez's Las Meninas to envisage how the canvases may have been arranged, the authors have turned to a kind of symbolic archeology to guide them and determine which paintings might have been displayed together. The result of their efforts is a work accessible to general reader and researcher alike. The publisher of this beautifully presented book, replete with black-and-white as well as color reproductions of the La Torre collection, is also to be congratulated. All in all, this work is one worthy of a king, even if that imperfect monarch should be Felipe IV.


Reviewed by: Brian Jeffrey Maxson
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This book offers a fascinating series of inquiries into the objects, architecture, and spaces in home interiors in early modern Italy, particularly in Florence, Venice, and Bologna. The essays are marvelously interdisciplinary, using a range of source material to examine different aspects of homes from across the socioeconomic spectrum. Descriptions of
interiors and quotidian objects drive the book, as well as offering some of its most tantalizing sections. This book should be read by all scholars interested in reconstructing how early modern Italians lived, arranged, and used their homes.

This edited volume fits into a growing historiography on the history of objects and interiors in early modern Italy. Explicitly responding and adding to the work of Richard Goldthwaite on the demand for consumer goods in Renaissance Italy, the authors of the essays seek to integrate the histories of material objects and spaces into questions about what made a house a home and how this conception changed from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Four closely related sections feature case studies on these themes. Part 1 emphasizes the changing use of interior spaces and objects; 2 focuses on objects related to the family; 3 looks at objects and spaces that aided in the presentation to and reception of guests in the home; and 4 concludes the book with two essays on the changing representations of the early modern Italian interior to museum visitors from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. The chapters are well tied together, with most chapters featuring several references that compare and contrast findings with other contributions in the book.

The first two sections focus primarily upon interior spaces and people while showing off the book's geographical range. Catherine Fletcher examines a surviving inventory for the Bolognese Casali family to investigate the similarities and differences between a dwelling in the city versus a country house and how these dwellings compared with houses in other cities in Italy. Susan Nalezyty demonstrates how Pietro Bembo moved objects from his home in Padua to his lodgings in Rome to help host and impress guests. Adelina Modesti returns the book to Bologna where Elisabetta Sirani's home blurred boundaries between a domestic workshop and a popular public site visited by important dignitaries and diplomats. Stephanie Miller's chapter not only provides valuable insights into the objects and spaces associated with different ages of children in fifteenth-century Florence; her section also provides numerous insights into premodern childhood and child-rearing more generally. Margaret Morse looks at the multiple uses of the portego, a large central room or hallway, in Venetian palaces, adding sacred elements to a space often seen as a space for banquets and other secular, social activities. Erin Campbell concludes section 2 of the book by looking at inventories for evidence of artwork in Bolognese homes, arguing that artwork continued to play many roles in households, especially traditional didactic and religious ones, even into the seventeenth century.

The last two sections turn to the objects within homes and the presentation of interior spaces in museums. Maria DePrano opens section 3 with a fascinating look into the objects used by the Tornabuoni family to entertain and impress guests. These objects included, for example, masks, wigs, suits of armor, and musical instruments. The section continues with Elizabeth Consavari's chapter, which argues that paintings, which increased in number in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Venetian homes, articulated a particular set of Venetian social values and laid a framework for attempts to amass ever-larger art collections within homes. Katherine McIver turns to an illuminating description of kitchen, dining, and preparatory spaces in Renaissance homes, as well as how these spaces and their objects were gendered, determined by socioeconomic status, and specific to times of the year or country versus city living. Allyson Williams seeks to reconstruct the rooms and objects of Lucrezia Borgia, with particular points on Lucrezia's awareness of the tastes and styles used by female contemporaries, such as Isabella d'Este. Jennifer Webb uses the fifteenth-century source, the Rules and Offices of the Court of the Duke of Urbino, for insights into how daily rituals
turned spaces throughout the ducal palace into carefully orchestrated displays for guests at the same time as meeting the needs of the duke and creating a home for the palace's inhabitants. Part 4 of the book moves the discussion later in time, to museum reconstructions of the Renaissance interior. Adriana Turpin shows a range of approaches that nineteenth-century museum curators took to fill and decorate rooms purporting to mirror Renaissance interiors. Susan Wegner concludes the volume with an essay on the challenges and subsequent innovative responses to creating a period room at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in 2008.

What emerges from this book is a sense of the distance between early modern conceptions of the home and interior and our own. Early modern inside spaces are shown to have been in flux, as objects came and went as the family moved, were reorganized to impress visitors, or altered with the seasons. Meanwhile, nineteenth-century assumptions about the interior continue to shape current exhibits in museums, portraying period pieces as timeless and precious rather than conveying the sometimes quotidian nature of objects. A cassone chest, for example, was intended for the floor and for use. As such, it was undoubtedly kicked, pushed around, moved without care, aged, inherited, put to different use, and eventually discarded. The descriptive quality of this book captures the diachronic as well as synchronic multi-purposes of spaces and objects of early modern Italy. It is a fascinating book with something to offer all scholars of premodern Italy.


Reviewed by: Christine Meek
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This volume comprises fourteen essays in honor of the distinguished architectural and cultural historian Deborah Howard on the occasion of her retirement. The basis on which the contributors have been selected is not made clear, but the volume does reflect her scholarly interests: the art, architecture, and physical environment of Venice, the role of patronage, the interplay of music and the use of space, and the reciprocal influences of Venice and the Ottoman Empire.

After a rather wordy and magniloquent introduction, the book is divided into five roughly equal sections. The first, entitled "Identity, Space and the City," comprises two essays devoted to categories of patrons not usually considered. Allison Sherman discusses the lay procurators of Venetian churches, a role that allowed scope for men who were hampered by immigrant background or cittadino status to assert their identity and even to engage in self-promotion. Esther Gabel considers the patronage of the sisters Sagredo, aristocratic women whose choices for interior decoration, organization of important festivities, and general way of life allowed them to carry the traditions of their own families into those into which they married.

The second section, "Drawing, Mapping and Translating Venice," deals with the making of Venice. In a carefully documented essay Paul Davies argues that Jacopo Sansovino originally envisaged a scheme for the whole of Piazza San Marco in which the Loggetta would completely encircle the campanile, while the nearby Library of San Marco would have had twenty-one bays, as Deborah Howard argued in 1974, with slightly smaller openings,