

## BOOK REVIEW

*Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography.* By JAROSLAV FOLDA. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xxxi + 411. Hardcover, \$135.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01023-9.

Jaroslav Folda has spent his career researching Crusader art of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries and has previously published three monographs on the subject. He continues his interest in the Crusaders in 2015's *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child Hodegetria and the Art of Chrysography*.

While the title of this monograph does not have the word "Crusader" in it, this is misleading since the goal of Folda's monograph is to trace the ways in which the Byzantine image of the Virgin and Child *Hodegetria* was appropriated by thirteenth and fourteenth century Crusader artists and then was transmitted to central Italian painters. In particular, Folda outlines the ways in which Crusader art and Italian panel painting appropriate the Byzantine Virgin Mary *Hodegetria* and transform her from *Theotokos* into the queen of heaven. Folda argues that the reason for the change in the Virgin Mary was the result of chrysography, or golden highlighting, that started to be used after the period of Byzantine iconoclasm. In the tracing of this appropriation of the Virgin and Child *Hodegetria* and its transmission, Folda also calls attention to the complex cultural and artistic exchanges that were occurring at the time among Byzantium, the Holy Land, and central Italy. (In the Byzantine period, the Virgin and Child *Hodegetria* was an iconographic depiction of the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos*, or mother of God. In these idols, the Virgin Mary holds her son at her side with one arm while the other points to Christ as the path to salvation.)

Divided into seven chapters, Folda chronologically and geographically traces the appropriation of the Virgin and Child *Hodegetria* by Crusader artists and its subsequent transmission to central Italian painters. After the introduction, in Chapter 2 Folda continues to set the stage for his thesis with his investigation of Byzantine icons and the appearance of chrysography after the period of iconoclasm. Folda then proceeds to investigate the adoption of chrysography in Crusader icons in Chapter 3. The next three chapters (Chapters 4–6) focus on the panel paintings of the Virgin Mary and Child in central Italy from the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries. These three chapters focus almost entirely on in-

dividual studies of icons; Folda closely examines and discusses numerous icons. In the final chapter, Folda devotes an entire chapter to the techniques of chrysography (Chapter 7).

Ultimately, Folda's monograph is an important addition to Byzantine, Crusader, and Italian Renaissance scholarship, especially in relation to icons, the origin of the Renaissance, and cross-cultural influences. In addition, very little has been written about chrysography, either by art historians or conservators, and thus Folda's monograph is filling in the much-needed gaps in this subject. Another strength of *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting* is that Folda follows the current art historical research trend of placing art into its larger context, especially when it comes to technique.

Perhaps the biggest drawback of *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting* is that it is designed for a highly select audience of art historians who specialize in Byzantine and early Renaissance icons of the Virgin and Child. If you are not an art historian specializing in these specific time periods and media, you will probably not find this book useful. The price, \$135, is also high.

Another flaw of the book is that it is overly ambitious. In the introduction, Folda outlines the agenda of *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting*, listing six issues that are central to his study; some of these have additional subsets (16). Folda is clearly trying to do a lot in his book, but at least he acknowledges this, stating that "this agenda is clearly a large one, and one that perforce requires us to be both selective and focused and for which we must have special assistance" (17).

*Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting* also would have benefitted from higher quality and larger images of the artworks discussed. While all of the images are in color, not all are high quality and many take up only a quarter of a page. Because Folda's book is about the nuances of chrysography, it is a necessity for the reader to be able to see what he is talking about, and some of the images preclude this. In short, most of the color plates do not do these exquisite icons justice.

Overall, though, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting* is an indispensable source for art historians who specialize in Crusader and early Italian Renaissance icons. While the text would have benefitted from better photographs, Folda nevertheless is able to add to the scholarship of the period and to expand upon his previous publications on Crusader art.

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