

Patronage, Liturgy, Art and Devotion under the Tribune of the Santissima Annunziata, Florence, Mid-Fifteenth to Early Seventeenth Centuries

Abstract

The church of the Santissima Annunziata was one of Florence's most significant pilgrimage churches, due to the presence of a purportedly miraculous fresco of the *Nunziata* painted on the counter-façade. The *Nunziata* enjoyed both local and international fame and was appropriated as a dynastic cult by the Medici Grand-ducal family. The focus of this article, however, is the tribune, located at the high altar end of the church. Art historians have scrutinized the progress of the tribune's construction between 1444 and 1471/1480, which was built as part of a program to expand the number of chapels available for lay patronage. Little attention has previously been paid, however, to the early patronage and use of the tribune chapels. This article explores the early history of the patronage of the chapels, the political connections of the families who acquired them, evidence of the liturgy performed there, the art produced for these spaces, and the special devotions that developed in several chapels from the time of the tribune's construction up to the early seventeenth century. The article presents a substantial quantity of new archival material and a reinterpretation of some previously published documents. New insight is offered into the function and use of the space, which embraced the friar's choir, by the friars, patrons and the broader public.