

Spazio di memoria, spazio di devozione. Il restauro del portico di San Pietro in Vaticano per il Giubileo del 1575

Abstract

Space of Recollection, Space of Devotion. The Restoration of the Portico of St. Peter's in the Vatican for the Jubilee Year of 1575

The article identifies the extent of the restorations to the portico – or narthex – of St. Peter's, commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585) on the occasion of the 1575 Jubilee. As a transitional site between the atrium and the interior space of the Basilica, the narthex was a crucial space within the Petrine complex. Over a period of more than a thousand years, the sepulchral monuments of many popes accumulated in this space, while monumental epigraphs, venerable images and fragments of ancient decorations survived on the external walls of the Basilica. Gregory XIII's restoration campaign, still little known or studied, led on the one hand to the loss or concealment of these earlier traces; on the other hand, it involved the adoption of new figurative models suitable to the pope's Counter-Reformation strategy of a devotional revival of the Basilica and its spaces. The most important painter involved in this papal initiative was Lorenzo Sabatini; the article analyzes the painter's work in its context with the help of new data.