

## Gothic Art for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

Review of:

Roland Recht, *Believing and Seeing: The Art of Gothic Cathedrals*, Translated by Mary Whittall, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2008, ISBN-13:978-0-226-70606-1/ISBN-10: 0-226-70606-0, cloth \$45 (paper \$27.50, ISBN-13:978-0-226-706078)

This is a translation of a book originally published in 1999, and as a potential text book for 'Gothic' or 'High Medieval' art it must be seen as a product of these limitations in 2008. 'Believing and Seeing' as a title, a fair translation of its French original, sets this apart from most previous efforts at summarising what its subtitle describes as 'The art of the gothic cathedrals'. Despite the subtitle Recht is above all concerned with 'Gothic art', and this he sees as above all the product of the development of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the devotional emphasis on the Passion of Christ, and 'the new standing of the visual arts in a society where the written word surrendered its dominant position to them'.<sup>1</sup> The latter point is surely highly contentious and hardly applicable to the theologians and canonists who dominated the commissioning of those arts.<sup>2</sup> But the prominence of the arts as a means of expression for devotion is convincingly present throughout Recht's book.

Structurally this is rather curiously diverse, a foil perhaps to Christopher Wilson's *Gothic Cathedrals*, an ideal modern summary in English of the buildings that contain that 'art', or to Paul Crossley's fundamental revision of Paul Frankl's *Gothic Architecture*,<sup>3</sup> neither of which make it to either of the two bibliographies, rather confusingly divided into Recommended Reading and a general bibliography.

<sup>1</sup> Given the emphasis Recht places on the Franciscans' development of the Passion cult one might have expected his bibliography to include, at least in the English edition, Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in late Medieval Italy: narrative painting, Franciscan ideologies, and the Levant* Anne Derbes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> The historiographic debate over the role of intellectual versus technical ideas is concisely summarised by Paul Crossley in Paul Frankl, revised Paul Crossley, *Gothic Architecture*, 1962, revised edn. 2000, YUP, New Haven and London, pp. 20-9, while Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1300*, YUP, New Haven and London, 2004, endeavours to intertwine the two with much success.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral. The Architecture of the Great Church, 1130-1530*, London, 1990; Paul Frankl, revised Paul Crossley, *cit.*; the latter is an indispensable reference source for almost the current state of literature and knowledge of the field. For Recht, on the other hand, 'Frankl's propositions (of stylistic interpretation 'based upon the *membra* present in every style') are obsolete for all practical purposes. Sedlmayr's concept of the church as a depiction of the Heavenly Jerusalem he dismisses as 'nonsense' along with the thesis of the 'baldachin', a vault bay and its four supports' as the quintessence of the Gothic style (Hans Sedlmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*, Zurich, 1950, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Graz, 1976). Crossley, pp. 27-8, sees the former concept as far more influential than Recht does, while the contrast between the choir of Durham with vaults and its nave as originally planned without them surely points to the symbolic significance of the vaulted bay at least in the formative stages of the Gothic style.

'Recommended Reading' has to stand in for most of the referencing one would expect in a book of this nature, a serious lack given the treasury of revealing quotations from contemporary sources that Recht provides and also the use of relatively little circulated studies of, for instance, polychromy that Recht rightly considers to be a major neglected aspect of the study of Gothic churches. He also goes on to emphasise that interrelationship of painting and sculpture, painted sculpture, paintings pretending to be sculpture and sculptors doing painting. Ironically, there are no coloured plates or figures even for those sections of the text.

Recht considers that 'works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were progressively affected by ... an enhancement of their visual value.' He considers the various arts created for worship as a unity, not for the first time but still against the grain of most publishing. This leads him to consider how different the conditions of production in this period were from the present, and it is his primary aim to combine a reading of that original set of attitudes with a concern for 'the material dimension of an object'. However, contradictions, perhaps inevitably, arise: for instance his view that 'the artist advances towards emancipation' reads much more of the High Renaissance or the post-revolutionary art of the 1830s and the 1920s than of the period in question. Throughout the book Recht's aim to provide a comprehensive historiographical account of approaches to his subject is complicated by a tendency to abstract propositions and sometimes self-contradictory sequences of thought: "While this principle [Riegl's principle of ambivalence in the figure-background relationship] will affect only ornament on opaque supports, it finds its ideal application in stained glass." One suspects that translation here and elsewhere creates some of these contradictions, but elsewhere his theories also frequently seem both abstract and subjective.

Large church architectural structures clearly play a major role in Recht's book, dominating the summary of medievalist historiography that occupies his first two chapters, but equally provoking many cautions about conflating contemporary views of 'art' with that of the era in question. It is a consistent virtue of the book to remind us of this disparity, yet it is surely a reflection of the Modernist's approach to the past that Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion is cited, and illustrated, as a reflection of the Gothic Cathedral's concern for curtain walls, an approach he goes on to problematise. In a book as wide ranging as this such an aside is a distracting confusion.

Given Recht's purpose from the start to see the arts of the structures his title has foregrounded, it is a little surprising to see Hans Jantzen's *High Gothic*<sup>4</sup> described as primarily a study of *raumgrenzen*, spatial boundaries and 'diaphanous structures', even if that was Jantzen's original concern in his research: to those of us studying in the decades after its publication it was above all as a synthesis of the interaction of all the arts and their meaning that it was important, a simpler and

<sup>4</sup> *Kunst der Gotik*, 1957, as *High Gothic*, London, 1962; Princeton 1984.

more direct approach than Recht's study to this day. A further clue to this partial reading of *High Gothic* lies in Recht's apposite comment that the 'conception of a norm - a "classical" norm at that- has a very French resonance, yet paradoxically it is a commonplace of German historiography.' Jantzen set out to provide a linear reading of the development of Gothic architecture that, if it were not already in place, has certainly prevailed since, subject to significant but not destructive revisions of fact. German theorising has required those little versed in the language to spend many hours to crack open an often very obvious message, but where translation or acclimatisation to an English-speaking environment prevailed, structures emerged that most of us have been very happy to hang our broad lines of history upon. For Recht, it is clear, the objection arises prominently in his approach to individual monuments against the tendency to homogenisation in our perception of, for instance, Chartres, with its huge transept and distinctive sculpture, or even St. Denis. He tends to avoid chronological progressions, and more valuably he overrides the limitations of media to which medievalist art history is still often subjected.

The problem of this book, for an Anglo-Saxon pragmatist, is that it aspires to achieve the broader vision of Germanic theorising without the clear lines and norms of that tradition, imposing instead a theoretical but subjective approach that is never clearly defined, recognisably close to the medievalist's post-modern consensus of a pluralist and intentionalist agenda but modified frequently by the essentially pragmatic detailed observation of Viollet-le-Duc and his own response to aesthetic situations, not necessarily of the original builders' programme. Symptomatic is the complexity of his explanation of why the builders of Bourges planned its hemicycle to have the identical depth to its other sexpartite vaulted bays, a basic situation that itself escapes his notice despite this being a critical moment for the double-bay sexpartite vault, going out of fashion at precisely this point in time, at Soissons and Chartres and almost everywhere else thereafter. One suspects that simple practically measured and constructed solutions underline many of Recht's more abstruse architectural analyses: he considers Vit Stoss's use of a round arch in the Cracow altarpiece to be symbolic, yet the central panel is structured to match the six squares of its wings, and the only normal arch that can be fitted into a double square is a semicircle with their base as its diameter. The round arch survives in Gothic architecture probably for this very reason and is understandably confined to occasional use.(figs. 1, 2)

The natural core of the book, given its subtitle, is the fourth chapter, 'Architecture and the "Connoisseurs"'. Paul Crossley has noted that in other respects Recht's book is about the art of the Gothic church far more than the Gothic cathedral, but this chapter is dominated by cathedrals.<sup>5</sup> It opens, inevitably, with Suger's St. Denis, and for Recht Suger's it is. Peter Kidson's attempt to define the

<sup>5</sup> 'The Reshaping of French Gothic', *The Burlington Magazine*, CLII, 2010, pp. 177-9 [CHECK]

chevet as the work of a highly specialised architect rather than the patron is ignored; indeed the chapter is startlingly unreferenced, most of its citations being to Panofsky's own Suger.<sup>6</sup> This limitation underscores much of the chapter's often refreshing but often quirky conclusions, and at several points the lack of references is very frustrating. Much hinges in Recht's reading of St. Denis, on a document of 799 extolling the many pillars of the previous structure, yet there is no citation.



Fig 1. Cracow: Church of Our Lady  
Cracow: the compositional basis for the  
circular closing arch



Fig 2. Vit Stoss: the high altarpiece of the Church of Our Lady,

Recht does throw new light on Suger's concern to preserve or evoke the church he inherited through his own columns, his mosaic portal, and the alignment of the new with the old as far as possible. Valuable is his emphasis of the reverence for ancient structures, at St. Denis and also at St. Rémi in Reims that he shows to echo and enhance the achievements of St. Denis in several respects. What one must disagree with is the assertion that 'less than a century later, Suger's choir was in danger of collapse'. Recht produces no evidence for this other than the rebuilding, and his discussion glides, at least in translation, between 'in fact' and 'in all probability'. Yet the obvious reason for the rebuild and the new stouter piers is that to preserve the ambitions of the royal abbey a century later a new style of architecture had to be matched, and a new scale, given the still Carolingian dimensions of Suger's legacy. In doing so the new architects once more moved on the nature of modern church building, an achievement ignored by Recht.

It is refreshing too, that he considers Sens as 'perhaps even more interesting than Saint-Denis', and he is illuminating on the plasticity of the shafts and

<sup>6</sup> Peter Kidson, 'Panofsky, Suger and St. Denis', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50, 1987, pp. 1-17.

mouldings that did so much to create the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic vocabulary. Recht cites St. Bernard's account of images of material things wrapping a protective shade around divine illumination to express the importance of shade as well as light in the arguably more conservative illumination of Sens. But he ignores the obvious point that one cannot compare the upper stories of Sens to St. Denis, since the latter's vaults were replaced in that 13<sup>th</sup>-century rebuilding. His conclusion that both churches were equally important for the new style is fairly made, though it is not clear to me how this point should undermine the long discredited view of the gothic as the product of individual technical features already to be found long before.<sup>7</sup>

From here it is also surprising to be led on to Cologne, Wells and the Wiesenkirche of Soest and then back in time to the (South) transept of Soissons, appropriately contextualised by Noyon and the Rhineland churches as a discussion of light 'never previously achieved'. Well, it is well recognised that the Soissons design is very closely related to St. Rémi discussed ten pages earlier in relation to the springboard of Gothic glazed space, St. Denis.<sup>8</sup> Without the joining up of some of the certainties of our overview of the evolution of the 'Gothic' style one is inclined to be cautious in accepting with too much confidence the broader aesthetics that Recht undertakes, in a somewhat piecemeal and fitful fashion, though they clearly relate back to the opening two chapters. His discussion of visual coherence, the integration of sanctuary and nave (rather than choir and ambulatory plus sanctuary, as Vignory is described) ends up in a rather tentative dialogue with a new need to distinguish them, by a change of vault shaft articulation at N-D Paris, by the addition of the apostolic statuary of Cologne, might usefully have engaged with the now missing choir screens that must have played a larger part in separating the two bodies and indeed in challenging that very unity of space that Recht sees as essential in the new Gothic programme. His progression into much later and very different concepts of a great church at Wells and the Wiesenkirche in Soest seems to me a wilful leap into different terrain without due preparation. The latter, after all, is a hall-church and different from Wells (and Sens) for the fundamental reason that it is not in any sense a 'gothic cathedral' (or great church) but a church devoted to a specific cult, more like the chapel of a great church than such a structure as a whole.

With the 'High Gothic', a term and a concept perhaps legitimately absent here, we get into territory where the scholarship, but also the archaeology, lie deep, and Recht seems unaware of a lot of it; certainly none of it is cited. For him the cathedrals of both Chartres and Bourges are the work of 'auteurs' or *auctores*, and individual ones at that. For as long as I have been a fellow-traveller of Gothic

<sup>7</sup> Niklaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, Harmondsworth 1943, pp. 44-5: "rib-vaults as against ribless groin-vaults are accepted as one of the *leitmotifs* of the Gothic style....."

<sup>8</sup> Dany Sandron, *La cathédrale de Soissons: architecture de pouvoir*, Paris (Picard), 1998, pp. 154-5: 'the architect of Soissons [S. Transept] must have been inspired by the triple arades of the radial chapels at Reims... the triplet formula of the clerestory is also undoubtedly borrowed from S. Rémi which also provided a reference point for Notre-Dame-en-Vaux'....

architectural research the latter has certainly been untenable and the former subject to a variety of challenges. Since the early '60s Van der Meulen's assessment that the rebuilding of Chartres began at the crossing and proceeded outwards has been recognised, even here.<sup>9</sup> But the two teams working East and West shared only a general plan, probably drawn up by someone from Soissons, whose precedence is now a virtual certainty but ignored here. The nave man had a very crude grasp of how to go about it, at least by the highest standards evinced by the Eastern team. But their own work had to contradict whoever laid out the integration of the crypt chapels surviving from the Romanesque era. So without having to go to the extremes proposed by John James,<sup>10</sup> where these masters become a shower of individual stone-cutters, a case at least entitled to a citation in view of the volume of evidence James brought to the table and which has a certain resonance in Recht's own view of the importance of stone-cutting technique, a subdivision of *auteurship* at Chartres is inescapable: a common design with two almost utterly divergent interpretations means two or more probably three masters, the first probably from Soissons and the nave master a local in love with the West rose.

The discussion of Bourges is even more demonstrably out of date, at best. For the last 50 years Peter Kidson has been teaching that Bourges is the product of two very different designs, and in 2000 he published what was already an open secret.<sup>11</sup> The chapels of the upper level (the lower structure never had any liturgical function whatsoever) are an integral part of the lower church from the start, and their buttressing cannot be removed from the original coursing despite the separate construction of the windows in between. Moreover their vault springers match the lower structure where each respond follows the line of the vault rib (these are simple structural terms Recht doesn't use). Beyond and within the outer perimeter of the upper church, on the other hand, in the piers of both aisles, responds are evenly spaced upon their piers to preserve the absolute symmetry of the support instead of the vault. Moreover the main piers stand upon a broad support wall below but are right on the edge of it, showing the second architect had a very different view of where they should be. It is therefore clear that Bourges began life as a second Sens, or possibly Paris, and was translated into something entirely new.

<sup>9</sup> J. van der Meulen, 'Die Baugeschichte der Kathedrale Notre-Dame de Chartres', *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d' Eure et Loire*, 23, 1965, pp. 79-126; 'Recent Literature on the Chronology of Chartres Cathedral', *Art Bulletin*, 49, 1967, pp. 159-64; J. van der Meulen and J. Hohmeyer, *Chartres. Biographie der Kathedrale*, Cologne, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> John James, *The Contractors of Chartres*, vol. I, Dooralong, 1979, vol. II, Wyong, 1981, and *Chartres Cathedral. The Masons Who Built a Legend*, London, 1982; J. van der Meulen, review of the above, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 70, 1984, pp. 83-9.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Kidson, 'Bourges after Branner', *Gesta*, 39, no. 2, 2000, pp. 147-56. For a suggestion that Bourges itself is cognate with rather than the inspiration for Le Mans and Coutances, which emphasises the role of a classic model or models for Bourges itself, challenged by Recht, see Joel Herschman, 'The Norman Ambulatory of Le Mans Cathedral and the Chevet of the Cathedral of Coutances', *Gesta*, 20, no. 2, 1981, pp. 323-32.

This might not have upset Recht's overall account, but it would certainly have upset his reading of the broad lines of mid-13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic as it doesn't those of the older 'High Gothic' view of Jantzen. At this point we are in fact led into the heart of a purely verbal problem, classic versus classical, on which English-speaking scholars are probably better versed than either of the two rival schools. Recht would be entirely correct in seeing Chartres as classic for what comes next, especially in view of his sensitive account of its distinctive use of wall paint to emphasise its height and its individual structural features. But Bourges is not less classical, as Recht asserts; in fact its impact and clear spatial design, an equilateral triangle extended through its length, also overlooked by Recht, speak of classical space, just as its echelon of aisles speak of an ancient heritage that belongs ultimately to the Romanised Mediterranean world of the *Oc* and not the *Oeuil*.<sup>12</sup> Recht sees the Bourges emphasis on structure as the inspiration of the late Gothic concept of space in eastern Europe, and its full height rounding of the wall above the piers has been considered to prefigure the development of the hall church; on the other hand its influence on Southern French and Catalan architecture is more demonstrable in the absence of any intermediaries in Central Europe itself.

A valuable part of Recht's agenda is to integrate into the largely Germanic historiography the work of Viollet-le-Duc, whose first-hand experience of these monuments is evident. His detailed analysis of moulding profiles and his recording of traces of surviving mural pigmentation are featured, though the translator's transplantation of 'modenature' without comment is unfortunate. For Recht it certainly stands for a crucial part of the aesthetics of Gothic structure, and the obvious English equivalent, 'mouldings', is therefore probably too restricted, but without some linguistic bridging the two cultures really do not meet.

Having taken Jantzen to task for not considering the role of wall colour in his reading of murality – in those days no-one did – Recht provides an extensive discussion of it, unfortunately without references and only black and white illustration. His reference to the original polychromy of Lausanne is unusual and valuable, but it is not entirely clear whether he sees it as a survivor of the coloured walls (ochre) of Chartres or a precursor of the shift to light glass and white walls that he sees spreading northward from Italy towards 1300. In either case it should be noted that the South-most transept chapel at Lausanne erupts into a riot of red and white (and silver?) patterns that must always have disturbed such an overall scheme, and that in such cases the broader scheme was always a relatively blank slate on which individual patrons and their artists could be expected to wreak conceptual anarchy.(figs. 3-4)

<sup>12</sup> The ultimate precedent is obviously the original basilica of St. Peter's in Rome; Cluny III provides a closer intermediary; the other great monastic pilgrimage church of St. Martin at Tours appears to have shared the Bourges design in the rebuilding of its transept, and the closest followers of the Bourges design are the cathedrals of Toledo, Barcelona, Milan and Lisbon.



Fig. 3 Lausanne Cathedral: nave north wall with original polychromy

Fig. 4 Lausanne Cathedral: south transept chapel with mid-13<sup>th</sup> century polychromy

Recht has worked with Grodecki and is responsive, not passively, to his ground-breaking work on the relationship between structure and illumination in the formative years of the style, summarising concisely the growing depth of colour in the growing windows up to 1250 and the general lightening of palette, in the glass from St. Urbain at Troyes from the 1270s and in the shift from ochre and grey to white as the basic wall tone a few decades later. But his detailed analysis of the tonal effects of glass seem to me far beyond the analytical concepts of a 13<sup>th</sup>-century glazier. He has spent many hours watching the shifting tones of glass as the daylight changes and the way in which they impact on other church surfaces, but it seems unlikely to me that the craftsmen involved could have calculated for such aleatory effects: at Lausanne the nearest walls were being changed as they worked! Nevertheless his comments on the structuring of narrative within the window glazing structure and the issues of balancing brilliant blues with opaque reds are well worth reading, though as Crossley has noted, his treatment of individual windows is reduced to a solitary example, the St. Eustace window at Chartres. He thus marginalises the role of one of the most fundamental elements of a Gothic church.

Although the structures that dominate Europe's older cities even today have a central and avowed role in Recht's book this extended chapter is framed by considerations of the devotions within them and the art that focused it. His cities are built upon the reassurance provided by the relics of the saints and driven towards the visual arts by a desire to see the host – body of Christ- at the mass, an innovation of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and by extension the remains of the bodies of other sacred beings. Recht touches upon the development of a narrative art that makes

them real through involving the spectator's conscious presence, a rather sensitive take upon the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century tendency to see such elements as a mere rhetorical device, though ultimately still a rather reductive view of what others might see as artists' and patrons' delight in the increasing ability to enlarge and enrich the vocabulary of description throughout the period. Recht shows the increasing role for narrative and dramatic involvement even to the point of making the displayed relics secondary to their presentation, and also explores the theories of light and sight from Robert Grosseteste to Nicholas of Cusa.

From these he proceeds to the buildings and then to their devotional imagery, sculpture first, and he considers altarpieces as primarily sculpted, a refreshing corrective to our concern for painted Italian ones, integrated, in fact into his account of the festivities which accompanied the completion of the more spectacular examples and the reminder that Veit Stoss was a painter as well as a sculptor. On crucifixes Recht is rather sketchy despite colourful quotations ranging from Aeldred of Rievaulx to Catherine of Siena and Heinrich Suso. The reasons for the replacing of a cross by a forked tree are only implicit in his citation of Venantius Fortunatus ('bend your boughs, tall tree of the Cross'), and the shift from four nails to the problematic three is ignored. On the Resurrection imagery and especially the spectacular fragments and records of the shrine of Lazarus at Autun he is altogether more compelling, though again one would like a fuller documentation. But the lack of a strict time sequence and the broader themes Recht is pursuing add up to a view that from around 1100 up to somewhere after 1550 a shifting entity comprising the 'art called "Gothic"' existed and was subject to a complex and hieratic intellectual structure including comprehensive views of knowledge and devotional strategy. This entity allows Veit Stoss to produce to produce a two-dimensional altarpiece in Cracow that is a true "Gothic" counterpart to Masaccio's Trinity fresco of 50 years earlier..... To anyone of a positivist frame of mind Stoss's altarpiece is as three-dimensional as a work carved in a material capable of limited depth could be; Recht's view of the framing arch as a *porta coeli* is not reduced by his limited grasp of geometry, since the ring of niched sculptures is indeed very like a normal Gothic portal, but Stoss is doing his best to give a set of convincing living beings the weight and space to make that entrance from the world we ourselves are in. In that respect the only differences between his work and Masaccio's are of style and rhetoric. The grand unity of Recht's intellectual vision is surely undermined by the complaint, or is it a confession, that 'illiterate clergy incapable of understanding the ideas of the scriptures were also incompetent to penetrate the iconographic programmes on the west fronts of cathedrals...' Recht sees this as a need for a growing 'visibility' in art for its audience, but perhaps it is simply a warning that the common ground of what we (and certainly not its own patrons, audience and creators) call Gothic was relatively simple, programmatically unambitious and highly varied in its aims and programmes, and far too much so to be collectively incorporated in any single book?

On gesture and dress Recht has apposite things to say, as one might expect, though the difficulty of interpreting either without more than the barest of contemporary verbal evidence is apparent. Uta at Naumburg holds the neck of her mantle together, raising its hem. For Henderson she was a couturier's dummy; two minimal literary references lead Recht to see her as a coquette.<sup>13</sup> This is to miss the point of the miniver lining of her mantle, and it is always worn as a lining denoting high noble status. There is no point in wearing it unless the viewer can see it. It doesn't make Uta available but far removed from normal company. Tomaso da Modena's St. Ursula spreads her mantle like a sunning butterfly in reverse. Even in the paradoxical language of medieval theology I do not think that this can be seen as an act of prostitution, quite the opposite!

It might be noted that Recht's view of the architectural essence of the 'Gothic' is the classic 1140-1350 time-frame, whereas that of the figurative arts stretches in either direction and far into what many call the Northern Renaissance or the Reformation, concepts bolstered by their own theoretical structures and equally applicable to a work like Stoss's. And as for the 'art of the cathedral' it is surely an antithesis, a major commission for the ambitious merchant patricians of Cracow's Lower Town in direct rivalry with the elite clergy and courtiers on the Wawel above.

There are some errors that may be due to the translator's or the typesetter's misinterpretations: the Franciscans fare badly. St. Bonaventure could hardly have been an 'eyewitness of [St. Francis's] pastoral actions', while the General Chapter that he himself convened to authorise his biography of Francis took place not in 1226 but 1266! Even more unfathomable is the statement that 'It is worth noting that Clement VI had been bishop of Angers in 1328, and all the evidence suggests that Matthew [of Arras] was chosen by Charles on the pope's recommendation'. To a European Angers is nowhere near Arras, and Clement was never its bishop; of Arras he was, and it clearly paid to have met him.

This then is a highly idiosyncratic book that has perhaps suffered a little from the passage of time and language from its original appearance. It is full of revealing citations and insights, and I recommend it for its conceptual range. But in my view its ambitions overreach its achievements, or at least their exegesis, and its conclusions should be treated with a degree of scepticism in some of their results, given its limits in relation to a more current bibliography even as presented by Frankl/Crossley a year after its original publication.

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Victorian and Art Nouveau but is primarily devoted to Bolognese illumination and painting before 1425.

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