

RECENSIONI

Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, Documents/I Documenti, Edited by Richard V. Schofield, Janice Shell, Grazioso Sironi. New Press, Como, 1989

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Active as a sculptor, architect and civil engineer, Amadeo was one of the busiest and most successful artists in Lombardy from the mid-1460s until his death in 1522. Thanks to the combined efforts of Richard V. Schofield, Janice Shell, and Grazioso Sironi we now have in one handy volume, *Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, Documents / I documenti*, a host of newly discovered records together with many previously published documents concerning Amadeo (1550 items in all). The book significantly expands our knowledge of Amadeo's career and life.

The documents vary widely in kind: payments for works of art, contracts, letters financial and real estate transactions, and Amadeo's will. Especially interesting and unusual are the contracts stipulating the terms of Amadeo's collaboration with various artists in anticipation of future work (docs. 13,32,87). There are important new discoveries, for example, a contract of 1469 in which Amadeo and Martino Benzoni agree to carve eight wooden statues for the Cathedral of Monza (doc. 7). This is the first documented wood sculpture by Amadeo and the first instance of his involvement with Benzoni, who is known from a relief now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland. Most of the new material comes from the fondo notarile of the Archivio di Stato in Milan and the Archivio della fabbrica del duomo in Milan. The Milanese material complements previous collections of documents focused on Pavia, Cremona and Bergamo; also Milan was the geographic center of Amadeo's career, and it is

the home base of Grazioso Sironi, without whose knowledge of the fondo notarile and skill in paleography this book would have been less rich, if not impossible.

The documents are presented in chronological order; their dates and present collocation are clearly indicated. The subject of each is briefly stated in Italian; there are no commentaries but some bibliography is listed after certain entries. There is a good index which allows readers to find the documents relevant to specific places or monuments. Some of the documents are transcribed fully, but many are not. Bracketed dots indicate that the editors have omitted text, but this occurs with such frequency that one is impatient to check the original document.

A special feature of the book is the fascinating glossary. According to Schofield, the glossary lists and defines all those words relating to architecture and sculpture, materials and techniques and a selection of other kinds of words concerning agriculture and plants. Each entry refers to a specific document but not all occurrences are listed.

The volume also contains a list of inscriptions. Yet it omits the important inscription on the relief of the Madonna and Christ Child with angels in the Misericordia in Florence. This signed work, published by Mideldorf in a 1956 study of Amadeo's early work, although noted in the bibliography, is omitted from section two of the Introduction.

This is a reference work. It contains a good bibliography, but no

adequate survey of the literature or critical analysis of the problems posed by Amadeo's art. There are no photographs of Amadeo's sculpture or architecture. The introduction (in English and Italian) includes only brief sections on Amadeo studies and his career, and longer sections are devoted to the functions of notaries, the content of notarial records, and the State and Cathedral archives of Milan. Section 1 «Amadeo studies» and Section 2 «The Amadeo documents: their scope and use» are incomplete and in my opinion misleading, because they omit and understate the importance of the contributions made by earlier scholars. Particularly disturbing is their failure to acknowledge the studies in the 1940s and 1950s by Dell'Acqua, Arslan, and Mideldorf. This deficiency is also apparent in discussing topics which are controversial such as Amadeo's training and the formation of his classicizing style.

Although this volume has lacunae, it is a welcome addition to the literature on Amadeo, and it will surely prove useful as a guide to further studies.

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