

The Franciscan 'Revolution' Reconsidered

This paper reconsiders the assumption that the textual and visual output of the Franciscan Order is informed by a limpid naturalism which, in turn, enables viewers (and readers) a seamless immersive experience. By focusing on the rhetorical descriptions of Francis of Assisi's stigmata, the paper reveals the modes whereby those unprecedented wounds were displayed and disseminated in texts and images in the first half of the *duecento*. The challenge facing the Order was the spectacularisation of a phenomenon that was deemed a profound enigma, and the details of which were guarded jealously as "secrets" by Francis. Consequently, the depiction of the *alter Christus* was implicated in a complex network of issues that subverted medieval notions of imitation, witness, participation, and representation.