



The Façade Reliefs of Orvieto Cathedral (Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History)

A-F Moskowitz

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This book presents in word and image the facade of Orvieto Cathedral, the reliefs of which are considered to be among the most beautiful and powerful of the Trecento. The town of Orvieto, located half-way between Rome and Florence, played an important and strategic role in the political struggles in Italy during the latter part of the thirteenth century. Frequently the place of residence for popes and their Angevins allies, it became the seat of the Curia under Pope Nicholas IV, which brought wealth and economic growth to the community. Moreover, it enabled earlier plans for a new cathedral, initiated around 1285, to be finally realised. It was Pope Nicholas himself who laid the foundation stone of the new Duomo in 1290, and although building activity continued until well into the seventeenth century, most of the main portion of the building was complete by 1308, creating a dazzling and unique Gothic structure. The facade of the Cathedral in particular, is a masterpiece of design and relief sculpture. Its rich decorative carving is of outstanding quality and the innovative, compelling iconographic programme spreads across all four piers of the lower facade. The corpus of photographs by David Finn, taken specially for this publication, shows the skill and narrative details of this virtuoso display of relief carving, while the text by Anita Fiderer Moskowitz, Professor of Art History at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, explains the building in the context of related Italian Gothic architecture, and discusses the problems and controversies regarding the design and ornamentation of the facade as well as the puzzling question as to its artistic attribution.. The author also interprets the basic iconography of the sculptures and provides full descriptions for the detail images.

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