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Giotto and the arena chapel: art, architecture and experience

Jacobus, Laura (2008) *Giotto and the arena chapel: art, architecture and experience*. Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History 47. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols. ISBN 9781905375127.

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Abstract

This book is divided into two parts, the first presenting new evidence and reconstructions of the chapel's design and early history; the second offering new interpretations of Giotto's frescoes. Appendices present original sources, all of which are newly-discovered, unpublished or previously published in inaccessible editions. An outline of the early history of the

Scrovegni family and the career of the chapel's patron, Enrico Scrovegni, introduces the first part of the book. It is argued that the chapel's varied functions played an important part in determining the form of the building and the content of its frescoes. A complete reconstruction of the appearance of the Arena Chapel at the time of its consecration in 1305 forms the basis for an entirely new understanding of Giotto's frescoes. Giotto was the architect of the Arena Chapel, architecture and decoration were completely integrated in his design. Changes in the design brief during the period 1300-1305 prevented the full realization of his design. Some of the paintings now seen in the Arena Chapel, which have always been attributed to Giotto, are not in fact by him. Several independent masters worked under Giotto's direction. He headed a flexibly-organized workshop.□ □ Part II is introduced by a discussion of the frescoes that would be encountered by visitors to the Arena Chapel. These frescoes were deliberately placed in these positions by Giotto in order to further a process of luminal transformation upon entry into sacred space. Giotto employed radically new compositional devices to evoke correspondences between the pictured protagonists in their fictive environments, and viewers in the real environment of the chapel.

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