



The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries

Paroma Chatterjee

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This is the first book to explore the emergence and function of a novel pictorial format in the Middle Ages, the vita icon, which displayed the magnified portrait of a saint framed by scenes from his or her life. The vita icon was used for depicting the most popular figures in the Orthodox calendar and, in the Latin West, was deployed most vigorously in the service of Francis of Assisi. This book offers a compelling account of how this type of image embodied and challenged the prevailing structures of vision, representation and sanctity in Byzantium and among the Franciscans in Italy between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Paroma Chatterjee uncovers the complexities of the philosophical and theological issues that had long engaged both the medieval East and West, such as the fraught relations between words and images, relics and icons, a representation and its subject, and the very nature of holy presence.

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