

*De Christiana Religione* to some twenty-five individuals, mostly of Italian descent, among them high-ranking as well as local churchmen, noblemen, local officials of North Italian towns, and personal friends, Ficino's treatise had little circulation during the fifteenth century and thereafter, thus accounting for the lacuna in scholarship on Ficino's treatise from the Renaissance to more recent times. The three translators of this seminal document have fortunately filled this gap with their insightful and impressive contribution.

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*Architecture and the Senses in the Italian Renaissance: The Varieties of Architectural Experience*. David Karmon.

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David Karmon eschews many of the unspoken conventions of academic writing in his study of Italian Renaissance architecture and lived sensory experience. Pitched to both specialists and educated general readers, the book is personal and subjective. Colorful verbal and visual images of the author himself, his children, his late dissertation advisor (James Ackerman), and his friends in action among canonic monuments, like Bramante's Tempietto, and built environments, like the maze at Hampton Court, enliven its pages. However, these vibrant, Instagram-ready shots of children at play do not disguise the ambition of Karmon's project: to offer a concise new reading of Italian Renaissance architectural history and outfit it with a broader and more contemporary toolbox, one more responsive to twenty-first-century concerns. The dense and contested multilingual secondary literature devoted to these famous buildings and places is largely set aside in favor of brief, quick-moving chapters drawing on a kaleidoscope of sources from across five centuries. A painting by Van Eyck testifies to the rigors of interacting with the urban environment of Bruges as readily as the author in a 3D Oculus Rift headset experiencing a reconstructed Domus Aurea through virtual technology. Chapters transition fluidly from across a wide and unpredictable range of topics and intellectual authorities, from contemporary Actor-Network Theory to the field's foundational theoretical literature, the treatises of Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti, and Palladio. Yet the book is lucidly organized, with clearly framed chapters providing an overview of the disparate topics addressed at the outset in elegant, supple prose.

In seeking to recover "the vanished atmospheres" (182) of carefully chosen cities, sacred spaces, gates, gardens, and hospitals in Renaissance Italy and the Ottoman empire, Karmon is looking for the reciprocal energy between urban environments and individuals often lost to history. On traditional questions of wealth and patronage, chronology and style, the design and building process, salient influences, and context,

the book is conspicuously silent. Chapters instead explore and attempt to recover the dynamic interactions of the built environment with bodies of different types, ages, faiths, genders, and social classes. A Brunelleschi nave can yield disembodied textbook images of tranquil geometry. Karmon scrambles the picture, interested in how different bodies perceived and experienced those buildings and spaces across time.

The book traces how the senses combine in chaotic and complex ways to shape experience, cognition, and emotions for particular people and social groups. Perspective shifts from navigating the treacherous streets of Venice as a woman in towering chopines or laying in the wards of the hospital at Edirne as an ailing patient seeking solace from the wafting aromas of its garden. Karmon compares early modern Christian, Jewish, and Muslim strategies for vivifying and reinforcing religious identity through carefully orchestrated sensory experience, particularly through the often-downgraded sense of smell. A chapter sensitively reconstructs through images, period texts, and inscriptions just how much has been lost to current visitors of the Franciscan chapels of the Sacro Monte at Varallo. An early modern pilgrim would have moved through a more intense, carefully sequenced, and immersive assault on all the senses, especially smell. By contrast, penned together by a militant Christian state, the Jews of Venice found a means through multisensory experience not only to practice their faith but also to draw themselves together as a community and express themselves to each other as Jews.

There is something disquieting about a writer as impeccably credentialed and evidently privileged as Karmon role-playing, lending his voice to subjugated peoples, sex workers, or the infirm without a framework of rich primary evidence. He has an intuitive faith that he can reach across time and retrieve ephemeral sounds, smells, and textures, and conflicting voices do not disturb the polished surface of his chapters. Given the absence of sustained attention to any one location or subject, Karmon breaks little new ground. A methodology rooted in sensory experience is also far from novel for architectural history of recent decades. The book's strength is in its multiplicity, its restlessness and imagination, its optimism that new understandings remain to be gained from even the most well-studied of Renaissance spaces, which can be approached anew.

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*Creating Place in Early Modern European Architecture*. Elizabeth Merrill, ed. Visual and Material Culture 1300–1700. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. 380 pp. \$150.

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A place is not merely a container of space but is invested with meaning. The intersection of the spatial and temporal axes determines the significance of the site, and within this matrix architecture not only responds to the genius loci but also helps to create it.