

## BIJUTSUSHI

*Journal of Japan Art History Society*

187 Vol. 69 No. 1 pp. 54–71

### **YURIKUSA, Mariko. A Reconsideration of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, with Reference to the Wall and Ceiling Paintings in the Church of San Sisto in Piacenza**

A masterpiece of the Italian High Renaissance, *Sistine Madonna*, painted for the main altar of the church of San Sisto in Piacenza, has been discussed over centuries from various aspects. For example, while H. Berting (1990) positioned this work as a turning point toward modern art, recent research (Prater 1991; Schwarz 2002) focuses on its religious meaning functioning within the celebration of the Eucharist, and within that particular liturgical space. However, many conventional studies should be reconsidered because they ignore the historical context of the monastery of San Sisto. Since 1425, the monastery belonged to the Benedictine reformist group, the Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua, which was later renamed as Cassinese Congregation. From the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, many northern Italian Cassinese monasteries underwent reconstruction; the reconstruction of San Sisto began in 1499. Raphael's altarpiece was installed there in 1514, and then, in 1517, the wall paintings by Bernardino Zacchetti from Reggio Emilia were completed. In this paper, I will focus on these historical circumstances as well as the iconographic program in the church, which has never been considered before in connection with the altarpiece. By the following procedure, I will reveal the meaning and the function of *Sistine Madonna* in relation to Zacchetti's mural and ceiling paintings.

First, I interpret the meaning of the images in the frieze of the West Transept. These paintings show various Old Testament sacrifices related to *Christ's Ascension* located in the dome of that Crossing. I show that the themes of both the wall and the dome are based on Chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Next, I discuss the frieze painting of the nave, which until now has been overlooked. By attempting to read and interpret the inscriptions, I will demonstrate how the iconographic program explicitly shows the theme of the history of salvation. Based on this, I will discuss how the *Sistine Madonna* installed on the altar has been incorporated into this program and reinterpret the subject of this work in light of the theme of Redemption/Incarnation.

The above considerations will highlight the similarities with other iconographic programs of Cassinese monasteries in northern Italy, such as San Benedetto Po near Mantova and San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, which were renovated in the same period. By placing this trend of religious/artistic renovation of the Cassinese Congregation in the context of the Reformed Catholicism on the eve of Reformation, I propose that the iconographic program of the monastery of San Sisto functioned to show their theory of salvation, and the *Sistine Madonna* as an integral part of that program.

THE JAPAN ART HISTORY SOCIETY

October 2019

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