

Haiping Liu: Path/route: Path from Mortal to Divine

The Renaissance space of the church played an important role in people's lives. Public spaces and private spaces built a network that people moved and acted in, and kept the city alive. One could find an efficient leading Path around/in a church, leading people to move from mortal to divine. Such a Path is reflected in frescos, in the case of Saintssima Annunziata Florence, also existed in real space of the church. Now it still has this function. In the courtyard of SS. Annunziata, the cloister of Vows, there were frescoes made by several local Florentine artists during the 15th and 16th centuries. There were six frescos, scenes of life of local Saint, Filippo Benicci. Five of them were made by Andrea del Sarto and one by Cosimo Rosselli. In those frescoes, Andrea del Sarto described how space changed along a leading path. The Path in the frescos started in public space: hills, a field outside the city. Then it moved into the city streets and semi-public space: the loggia of the church. Next the path led people to semi-indoor space: the courtyard of the church, then reached indoor space: the altar in the nave. In the end, the Path stopped in the closed divine space of Saint's tomb and relics. Frescoes were one part of the path. They were located at the beginning of the path, in the courtyard. Frescos introduced how people would move from mortal space to divine space; they were also a guidebook that taught people how to behave properly in different space. Also they explained us the preaching function of the whole space system. Today the path still works as it does in the frescos. One reason for this is that the structure of SS. Annunziata did not change much since 15th century, another is that the strategies of leading people to move physically and mentally is still the same.

1: local and contemporary Saints are guides and models for people: Saint Filippo Benicci in 15th century, Maria Valtorta today. The path in frescos ended at the tomb of St. Filippo, in the real space at the tomb of Mary.

2: On the path, more divine space, more closed and difficult to reach.