



Old Women and Art in the Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior (Visual Culture in Early Modernity)

Erin J. Campbell

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Though portraits of old women mediate cultural preoccupations just as effectively as those of younger women, the scant published research on images of older women belies their significance within early modern Italy. This study examines the remarkable flowering, largely overlooked in portraiture scholarship to date, of portraits of old women in Northern Italy and especially Bologna during the second half of the sixteenth century, when, as a result of religious reform, the lives of women and the family came under increasing scrutiny. *Old Women and Art in the Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior* draws on a wide range of primary visual sources, including portraits, religious images, architectural views, prints and drawings, as well as extant palazzi and case, furnishings, and domestic objects created by the leading artists in Bologna, including Lavinia Fontana, Bartolomeo Passerotti, Denys Calvaert, and the Carracci. The study also draws on an array of historical sources - including sixteenth-century theories of portraiture, prescriptive writings on women and the family, philosophical and practical treatises on the home economy, sumptuary legislation, books of secrets, prescriptive writings on old age, and household inventories - to provide new historical perspectives on the domestic life of the propertied classes in Bologna during the period. Author Erin Campbell contends that these images of unidentified women are not only crucial to our understanding of the cultural operations of art within the early modern world, but also, by working from the margins to revise the center, provide an opportunity to present new conceptual frameworks and question our assumptions about old age, portraiture, and the domestic interior.

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