



Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium

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This easily accessible volume, which grew out of a series of lectures presented at the Smithsonian Institution in 1991, aims to provide a coherent introduction to Byzantine culture with a focus on the interconnected realms of art and religion. The eight participants have revised their lectures into chapters on Byzantine history, theology, icons and icon theory, church architecture, monumental painting, silver church furnishings, illustrated liturgical books, and pilgrimage. In addition to presenting current research on this range of topics, the chapters each contribute original scholarship from authors who are recognized experts in their respective fields.

The Introduction, by Linda Safran, deals with views and definitions of Byzantium over the course of its long history and considers why that civilization deserves our attention today. It underscores the essential unifying role of the Orthodox religion in a vast and fluid empire and clarifies how the experiential aspects of that religion—churches, liturgy, church arts and imagery, religious travel—open a window into Byzantine culture. Throughout the book, the past is made vivid by considering what Byzantine believers heard and said and did, as well as what they saw.

The book's chapters are cross-referenced and are complemented both by endnotes that cite primary and secondary sources and by "Suggestions for Further Reading" that include English and foreign-language references. There is no comparable art history text that combines this high-caliber range of current scholarship with more than 250 illustrations, including 16 pages of color plates, to introduce Byzantine culture to a broad readership.

Contributors are Joseph Alchermes, Susan A. Boyd, Anna Kartsonis, Henry Maguire, Robert Ousterhout, Eric D. Perl, Nancy Patterson Šev?enko, and Gary Vikan.

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