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Poor Clares, Monarchy and Franciscans in the Chapel of Saint Michael in the Convent in Pedralbes and Beyond

The convent of Santa Maria de Pedralbes, royal foundation from 1326, is one of the most important Catalan centers for enlightening the relationship between the world of Franciscans and Crown and Court when it chose the complex of a Mendican Order as the place of burial. Transformed into residence of the Queen Dowager, Elisenda of Montcada, Pedralbes provides us with a project reduced in scale to that of royal pantheon of Santa Chiara in Naples. The various enclosed spaces of the convent of Poor Clares, built in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, were decorated with interesting fresco cycles, vestiges of which remain fragmented in the cloister and in the spaces known as the Abadía or the Ángel. Without doubt, the decoration of the so-called chapel of St Michael stands out both for its state of preservation and its iconographic program and formal characteristics, as well as for the documentation, dated to 1343 and 1346, that relate to these paintings as works commissioned from the workshop of Ferrer Bassa by the abbess Francesca de Saportella. Two contracts, rich in details, describe the terms of the work to be performed and the subject of the paintings. The goal of this study is to analyze, including studying the other Franciscan works in the countries of the Catalan-Aragonese Crown, some of the particular keys of the complex iconographic program, based on the stylistic platform in direct relationship with the Italian artistic world and with the adaptation of contents and images to a particular Franciscan environment.