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“Gender”, Visions and Senses: New Contributions to the Tabernacle of Beato Chiarito in J. Paul Getty Museum

The present article contributes to the study of the relationship between the vision as a visual medium in painting and feminine spirituality in 14th century Italy. My starting point is the Beato Chiarito tabernacle in The Getty Museum of Los Angeles, which is nowadays ascribed to Pacino di Bonaguida (1302-ca. 1340). The tabernacle shows a gender explicit iconography, clearly demarcated in both context and function. Those gender implications have not yet really been explicitly dealt with in the literature, especially regarding the medieval concept of “vision”, “visionary” and “visual”. Additionally, the tabernacle’s iconography is rather unique, so I propose a number of solutions to disentangle this mystery. For that purpose the text discerns five iconological perspectives: (1) the visual and the visionary, (2) inward and outward interaction (image and outer-image), (3) mirrors of social positions, (4) the body as spiritual medium and synaesthesia and (5) finally the meaning of the incarnation for 14th century (female) spirituality.