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**Visions, Mental Images, Real Pictures**

**The Mystical Experience and the Artistic Patronage of Sister Battista da Varano**

The aim of this article is to analyze, from a historical-anthropological point of view, the relationship between women's mystique experience, "inner visualization" and artistic production, through the study of the visions and the artistic patronage of Sister Battista da Varano (1458-1524), one of the greatest female Franciscan writers of the Italian Renaissance. In her works, the nun often describes her visions, in which her familiarity with the devotional images present in her city emerges. Going beyond this codified iconography, Sister Battista, during her mystical experience, also shapes symbols within her mind. These symbols are presented as signs of her privileged dialogue with Jesus. Thanks to the wealth of her family, Sister Battista also manages to commission works of art. In the choir stalls of her monastery, executed by Domenico Indivini in 1489, the nun asks the artist to transform her mental images, received during the ecstasy, in real images. Not adequately explicable as manifestations of women's discomfort, the visions of Sister Battista can be interpreted as the result of a mind educated in the use of images and skillful in "inner visualization". Through these "techniques of the body" (Marcel Mauss), learned in the monastery and shared by the society in which she lived, Sister Battista can successfully achieve her most desired goal: to see Christ and to communicate with him.