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**People as New Art Commissioners?
Examples of Devotion of Sacred Art in the Salento Region at the Beginning
of the Third Millennium**

The Salento area in Italy is currently experiencing a kind of globalization affecting sacred art images. "Timeless" imitative images, based upon 19th century models, originating from high prototypes, have been replaced in home furnishings by pop icons of the Saints, the Crucified Christ and the Virgin Mary deprived of any artistic research. Paintings and images must be immediately recognizable everywhere: simplified and visually strong, as in contemporary advertisements, and serially reproducible. The popular taste, regardless of any real artistic consideration, directs the choices of parish priests and mayors, asking for images without symbolic contents. The people seem to be the real new art commissioners: it may even occur that forms of devotion not officially recognised by the Church, such as the devotion regarding the so-called "Lady of Medjugorje", get a place inside a local church, next to the recognized holy icons. The *Lady of Medjugorje* representation follows an elementary and disarming pattern which resembles *Barbie* stereotypes. Federico Zeri asked the question about how the sacred image of the late 20th century should be formulated. Today, the overview of so-called sacred art proves that his words were more prophetic than ever. If we carry on tolerating the fact that sacred art is destroyed by the lack of any content, soon somebody will seize its fascinating and easily traceable criteria to attract an addicted and unprincipled mass of people towards ideas which are totally opposed to the evangelical message.