



The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco

Mary Bergstein

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Along with Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, and Donatello, Nanni di Banco (ca. 1374-1421) determined the course of Renaissance art in Florence, and yet he has received relatively little critical attention. Here Mary Bergstein brings a fresh, wide-ranging critical perspective to bear on the artist who created some of the most important public works of the early Renaissance period, including his life-size niche figures for Orsanmichele and the *Assumption of the Virgin* for the Porta della Mandorla of the cathedral of Florence. She offers a complete study of the artist, including a much-needed social history of his sculpture. In a series of five thematic essays, Bergstein interweaves biography with rich explorations of the political, historical, and cultural context in which Nanni worked, while offering new insights into several of his most famous sculptures. The book concludes with a catalogue raisonné and a documentary register.

Nanni has been typically viewed as a traditional stonecarver who took up a verbatim archaeology of classical forms in statuary, but lacked an overarching sense of imagination. Bergstein seeks to redress this notion, beginning with an exploration of Nanni's aesthetic and intellectual development, most notably through his leadership role in the stonemason's guild. Nanni's sculpture, she maintains, frequently expressed a gravitas of character and physical presence, nuanced by a profound awareness of mortality, whereas his approach to immortality was transcendent in its attempt to link the spiritual concerns of the Florentine city-state with those of the entire Christian cosmos.

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