



Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

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A collection of original essays, *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters* showcases the diverse questions currently being asked by gender scholars dealing with French, Netherlandish and German art from the medieval and early modern periods. Moving beyond the reclamation of personalities and oeuvres of 'lost' female artists, the contributors pose questions about gender and sex within specific historical contexts, addressing such issues as intended audience, use of the object, and patronage. These avenues of inquiry intersect with larger cultural questions concerning societal control of women. The book's three sections, 'Saints,' 'Sinners,' and 'Sisters, Wives, Poets' are each preceded by a concise introductory essay, detailing themes and offering reflective comparisons of theses and information. In 'Saints,' contributors look at women who were positive exemplars used by society to uphold standards. In the second section, the essays focus on the power of women's sexuality. The third section expands beyond the customary dichotomous division of the first two to examine women in diverse roles not widely studied as positions of women in those times. This final section expands our definitions of women's responsibilities and realigns them historically; it argues that women, and thus gender, need to be understood within a much broader historical context and beyond simplistic approaches sometimes superimposed by present-day readers on past times. This volume answers an acute need for research on the art of Northern Europe prior to the 20th century, and highlights the possibilities of new directions in the field. The effect of the new scholarship presented here is to broaden the discursive field, allowing fluidity of disciplinary boundaries, resulting in a volume that is illuminating to historians of more than art alone.

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