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# PATRONAGE IN THE RENAISSANCE

Edited by  
Guy Fitch Lytle  
and Stephen Orgel

FOLGER INSTITUTE ESSAYS

Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library

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## PREFACE

This volume had its origin in the Folger Institute symposium *Patronage in the Renaissance*, organized by Guy Lytle and held at the Folger Shakespeare Library in May 1977. The topic is one that has been of increasing importance in Renaissance studies, initially for historians of the arts, but more recently for political, social, and cultural historians as well. Patronage, it has become clear, was a complex system functioning not merely on the surface of society to provide luxuries, but as an essential and inevitable element in Renaissance culture.

Eight of the fourteen essays in this volume—those by Professors Gundersheimer, Harding, Peck, Lytle, Orgel, and Janson, and by Drs. Hope and Lewis—derive from papers delivered at the symposium. The remaining six have been contributed by scholars whose work in the field has seemed to the editors particularly original or challenging, and touching on areas not discussed by the original participants.

We have not attempted to achieve geographical coverage here. We have been more concerned with illustrating the broad range of methodologies employed by the most interesting recent work on patronage, and in pointing out directions and interrelationships. Werner Gundersheimer's essay provides a general theoretical introduction to the subject as a whole, and the more specific articles address themselves not so much to particular areas and situations as to particular kinds of questions and problems. Most of our contributors are concerned with aspects of patronage in Renaissance England. In part this reflects the interests of the sponsoring institution, the Folger Institute, but it also indicates an area in which especially fruitful work is currently being done. The concentration on England seemed to us to represent less a bias than a promising test case. Thus, our three pure art historians deal with Italian subjects; but read in the context of the more broadly conceived essays of Professors Kipling and Smuts, they reveal vividly to what extent and in what ways the Italian situation provided the norms for those other societies which came to the Renaissance later. Taken as a whole, the volume exemplifies the genuinely interdisciplinary, indeed unitary, nature of the topic, the centrality of the patronage



### Preface

system to Renaissance culture, even when (as Professors Marotti and van Dorsten show) it failed to operate effectively. Artistic patronage is thus an aspect of political patronage, and concepts like flattery and corruption must be continually reassessed in the light of the real aims of the system.

Perhaps a word should be said about our use of the term *Renaissance* in our title. It is admittedly a convenience, covering more than a strictly historical construction would allow. To call the court of Charles I a Renaissance court is, no doubt, to weaken the term almost fatally as a useful description. At the same time, it does indicate the extent to which England, and the northern countries generally, were still deeply imbued with Renaissance ideals, even in the early seventeenth century; and the very latitude of our subject seemed to justify some expansion of our vocabulary.

S.O.

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### Contributors

English Renaissance poets and dramatists as Edmund Spenser, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, and John Donne.

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### PART I



### Introduction

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