

Title of Grant: Avian Images in the early Franciscan Art of Orte (Lazio) and Assisi (Umbria), Italy

S2008 – 162P –CF

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Abstract:

This project involved cataloging and characterizing images of birds in early Franciscan art, continuing a project I started in 2007. Most of the works I studied, including frescoes, are located in Italy and were viewed there. Travel funds to view and photograph early Franciscan art in Orte, Assisi, and nearby Umbrian towns allowed me to view works I have not yet seen and to answer questions that have developed since I started my research there last year.

Actual Outcomes:

In my application I emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of my research and my hope to communicate this with faculty and students. I have been able to do this through presentations in the fall semester of 2008 and plan additional presentations and publications that will continue to show the benefits of such work.

In regards to the data I planned to obtain in Italy, I was able to visit Assisi, Rome, and Perugia and view significant works there, enlarging my data set significantly over what I obtained on my initial visit in 2007. I viewed every work I had prioritized when scheduling my trip with one exception; in that case, I was able to secure a promise of digital images of the work from Bill Cook, a scholar I mentioned in my application. I corresponded with Cook before my trip and met with him in Assisi during my trip; this was an unplanned, positive outcome of my travel.

I have approximately 3300 digital images from the trip, several of which have already been used in my presentations, and some of which I anticipate using in publications. I have two articles in preparation that are a direct result of my study in Italy in 2007 and 2008. One is based on the Giotto fresco cycle in the upper church in Assisi; the other is a summary of all of the birds identified in early Italian Franciscan painting.

Other Colleges: N/A

Discussion and Critique:

My trip and the time I was able to spend in Italy were actually more productive than I had anticipated. I not only saw all but one of the paintings I wanted to see, I also saw many others that provided

additional context for my work. I was able to get numerous useful digital images, and I got new ideas for future research.

My basic research into the identification of birds in early Franciscan painting is not finished because there are some paintings I have not yet seen (and do not have images of). But I have a clear idea now of the scope of the problem.

My basic idea of using local transportation rather than renting a car was a sound one. I would definitely repeat this approach again. My only budgetary difficulties were due to the changing exchange rate; I actually left for Europe one day after the dollar/Euro exchange rate reached its record high (well over \$1.55 per Euro). This caused my hotels to be more expensive in dollar terms than I'd anticipated, but by traveling less on trains I was able to offset this somewhat. In the end, the unfavorable exchange rate did not hinder me in any major way from doing the work I went to do.

Evaluation:

As indicated in my original proposal, I planned to have a prioritized list of images and locations to visit in Italy and then to see as many as possible, write notes on them, and photograph them when possible while there. I was able to do this. I traveled in July 2008 and had a successful trip (even the flights were on time). I saw every image on my list but one, and visited every site specifically mentioned in my proposal but one (the Orte diocesan museum). In the case of that exception, I talked to the curator on the phone while in Italy and also have secured the promise of images of the painting I need to evaluate.

I have also lectured on my studies since my return, another criterion mentioned in my proposal, and have written drafts of two articles based on my findings. And one significant unanticipated benefit was my meeting with Bill Cook in Assisi. Thus my project was highly successful, with all major anticipated outcomes achieved, and one unexpected one as well.

Dissemination:

- Two classroom presentations at SVCC (my school), fall semester 2008.
- Presentation at the VCCS Humanities Peer Group meeting, Richmond, October 2008.
- Scheduled presentation at the April 2009 VCCS New Horizons meeting, Roanoke, VA.
- Two articles in preparation for art history journals, and one for a community college journal, possibly Inquiry.