

Mary in Western Art

Timothy Verdon

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Miraculous Mother: Immortalized in countless works of art, worshipped in prayer around the world, the Virgin Mary has remained an enigma and object of fascination for 2,000 years.

In *Mary in Western Art* Hudson Hills Press, 10 x 13, 238 color photographs and illustrations, 234 pages, hardcover, \$60.00, 0-9712981-9-X), Timothy Verdon, an art historian and priest, has put together a lush collection of enlightening and historically significant pieces that illustrate Mary's life and her enduring significance to Christianity. Essays by the author offer detail about the art and elaborate on Mary's place in history.

The book is divided into three main categories of Marian art. The section "Mary as Figure" features works found in churches depicting the Holy Mother with her Savior-son, often on a throne, wearing a crown, or surrounded by other royal imagery. In these works of art, Mary represents The Church; the bond between mother and child represents the bond between Christ and The Church.

The pieces in "Mary as Woman" depict the Virgin Mother as a woman and seek to find the biographical truth that the Bible failed to give. Her innocence at the Annunciation, her love for her child, and her pain at the Crucifixion are the main subjects of these works.

The third section, "Mary and the City: Florence," depicts the way European cities between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries identified with Mary, and thought of her as their own. In "Double Intercession," writes the author, "Christians turn to Jesus' mother, knowing that her son can deny her nothing." When Mary appeals to her son, the people's prayers are answered in the form of a white dove.

A thoughtful and comprehensive look at an extraordinarily compelling figure.

WHITNEY HALLBERG (October 5, 2006)

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