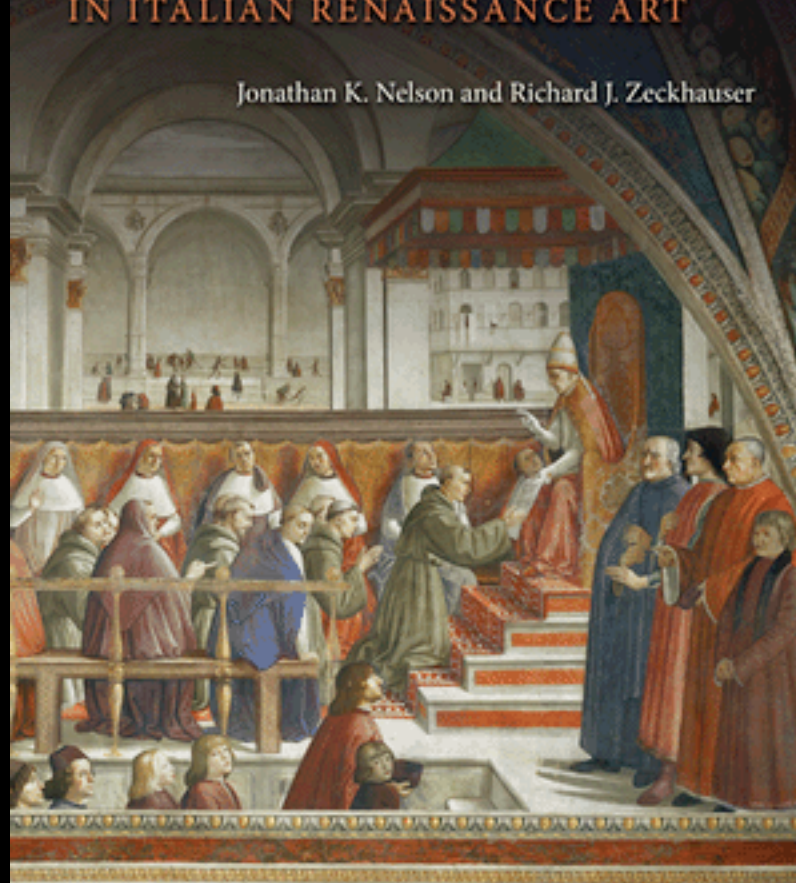


The Patron's Payoff

CONSPICUOUS COMMISSIONS
IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART

Jonathan K. Nelson and Richard J. Zeckhauser



Patronage

- “Corporate” patrons:
city governments, religious orders, brotherhoods
- “private” patrons:
aristocracy, rulers, merchants

What provided incentive for the Patron's Payoff?

- Desire for relative prestige
- Availability of disposable income
- Loosely defined standard of elite status - this allowed for social mobility

Avenues for expenditure and conspicuous consumption

- Art (portraits, frescoes, chapel/tomb decoration)
- Architecture (country villas, city palaces, tombs)
- Ceremonies (processions, marriages, funerals, festivities).
- Gardens
- Tapestries
- Clothes etc. etc. etc.

Commissioning Game

- The players:
 - Patrons (principal)
 - Artist (agent)
 - Audience

Patrons

- Principals
 - Client
 - Authors
- (modern CEO)

Artists

- Agents
- Service provider
- Authors
- (advertising agency)



Contracts, negotiations (detailing of elements of signposting, signalling and stretching) :
Carrot and Stick policy

Audiences

- Heavenly - inspirational and uplifting to the soul
- Contemporary - target audiences (fellow nobles, elites, ruling classes), and plebeians
- Future - the advantages of durable legacies

The Stakes

Benefits

Prestige

Power

Honor

Financial benefits

Costs

Financial (labor, materials)

Risks of negative reception

Constraints

Physical constraints of location, space, availability of material, finances

Rules of decorum

Demand or availability of superstar artist

Being Distinguished

Magnificence

Association with 'greatness'

Public display

Greater civic good

Exclusive virtue of the rich and
well-born

Architecture - sumptuous but
worthy

Appropriateness (decorum)

Signaling

Differential costs

Art signaled status

Appropriateness

Exclusiveness

Signposting

Messages that convey the truth but not the whole truth

Stretching

Overstatement of patron's accomplishments or qualities