

THE INVENTION OF NORMAN VISUAL CULTURE

In this book, Lisa Reilly establishes a new interpretive paradigm for the eleventh- and twelfth-century art and architecture of the Norman world in France, England, and Sicily. Traditionally, scholars have considered iconic works like the Cappella Palatina and the Bayeux Embroidery in a geographically piecemeal fashion that prevents us from seeing their full significance. Here, Reilly examines these works individually and within the larger context of a connected Norman world. Just as Rollo founded the Normandy “of different nationalities,” the Normans created a visual culture that relied on an assemblage of forms. To the modern eye, these works are perceived as culturally diverse. As Reilly demonstrates, the multiple sources for Norman visual culture served to expand their meaning. Norman artworks represented the cultural mix of each locale, and the triumph of Norman rule, not just as a military victory but as a legitimate succession and, as often, the return of true Christian rule.

LISA REILLY is an associate professor in the School of Architecture, University of Virginia. She is the author of *Peterborough Cathedral* and *Vassar College*, editor of *Skyscraper Gothic*, and served as the editor of *Gesta*.

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THE INVENTION OF
NORMAN VISUAL
CULTURE

ART, POLITICS, AND DYNASTIC
AMBITION

LISA REILLY

University of Virginia



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To
Joseph Dietz
(1909–1965)
&
Michael Joseph Reilly
(1902–1969)
Qui transtulit sustinet
and
Anne-Marie Sankovitch
(1958–2005)

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The idea for this book emerged during my first trip to Sicily in the late 1980s while I was still finishing my dissertation on Peterborough Cathedral. Seeing the Cappella Palatina, Monreale, Cefalù, Syracuse Duomo, and other sites in Sicily challenged my thinking about Norman architecture specifically and Romanesque Europe generally. I resolved during that trip to follow my study of Anglo-Norman Peterborough with one of Norman visual culture more broadly speaking. At the time, Norman Sicily and the medieval Mediterranean received scant attention from art historians. Over the intervening years, Sicily and the Mediterranean have become the subject of extensive and regular study reflecting changing ideas in visual cultural studies.

This book has benefited greatly from this increased interest in Sicily and the Mediterranean, which has in many ways sharpened my interest in considering how Norman visual culture fits together; what the relationship is between these seemingly disparate works of art and the wide-ranging adventurers who were their patrons. My ideas have changed significantly over the many years (and two other books) that I have been engaged with this study. I worry that I do not remember the many people who helped with resources, discussion, and feedback along the way as well as funding. I thank them all here. The Dean's Office of the School of Architecture, most recently under the leadership of Ila Berman, generously provided support for obtaining images and subvention for the color plates as well as research leaves along the way. The Bonnie Wheeler Fund provided support and encouragement that was absolutely transformational in my ability to complete this project as well as my determination to do so.

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