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Jan Pieper

Pienza – Il progetto di una visione umanistica del mondo

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The city of Pienza, which the humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini had built at his birthplace as Pope Pius II (1458–1464), is considered to be the first Renaissance ideal city. Here for the first time the urban interior of a piazza opens on to open countryside, and also for the first time in the history of modern building, architecture and nature are seen as complementary opposites. Fundamental early Renaissance architectural ideas like the classical church façade following the scheme of the ancient triumphal arch or the block-like isolation of a palace in the manner of a Roman insula are formulated with the total clarity here for the first time and brought together in a single project.

One might think that this incunabulum of modern urban architecture has been so central to the view of architectural and art history that there is nothing more to document, or even to research here. But this is true only of a series of individual art-historical problems. While painting and sculpture have definitely drawn the interest of large-scale treatment in work monographs, architecture and urban development have so far been the subject only of short works or individual essays. So far there has been no precise survey of the project as a whole, the essential basis of any academic analysis of architecture. And so it is not surprising that even fundamental typological details of the architecture of Pienza have not been noted. But when even the facts have scarcely been recorded, the truly interesting questions of architectural history like style, structure and iconography cannot be considered. The meaning and significance of the architecture of Pienza have so far not been explored, and the present volume is the first comprehensive monograph that does justice to all aspects of Pius II's creation.

Jan Pieper was born in 1944 and has been a professor of architectural history since 1982. From 1988 to 1993 he was Director of the Institute of Architectural and Urban History at the Technische Universität Berlin, and since 1993 he has occupied the Chair of Architectural History and Preservation of Historic Monuments at the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule in Aachen. He studied architecture in Berlin and Aachen and at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, and after that architectural history at London University. Central to his academic work is comparative architectural history, which deals with the investigation of generally widespread architectural thinking and fundamental common features of architectural tradition in quite different cultures.

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