

Public Abstract

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In *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages*, Kathryn Rudy discusses the fact that medieval religious women had little chance of visiting Jerusalem, Rome, or other pilgrimage destinations in the flesh, even if they had the means and desire to do so. Instead, cloistered women would take spiritual pilgrimages and imagine themselves visiting sacred sites.

This thesis focuses on a series of six paintings that were commissioned by the nuns of St. Katherine's convent in Augsburg between 1499 and 1504 to decorate their newly constructed chapter house. These paintings depict the seven major pilgrimage churches in Rome, scenes from Christ's Passion, and episodes from the lives of the saints and were painted by Hans Holbein the Elder, Hans Burgkmair the Elder, and the artist now known only as the Monogrammist L.F.

A number of factors including the enforcement of strict enclosure, the granting of a papal privilege, and the building of the new chapter house contributed to the commissioning of the basilica cycle. The paintings were also a way for the nuns and their families to express their piety and demonstrate their wealth and social status. The depictions of scenes from the lives of the saints and the Virgin Mary served as exemplars for the nuns, while the Passion scenes focused their devotion on Christ and his suffering. Most importantly, the paintings facilitated spiritual pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem, which allowed the nuns to gain the indulgences associated with the churches and other sacred sites.