

“Simulating the Ascent: Jacopo Ligozzi and the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte della Verna* (1612)”

Complete with large, sumptuous plates with bizarre rock formations and luscious vegetation, the *Descrizione del Sacro Monte Della Vernia* (1612) simulates the experience of visiting La Verna, the mountain site where St. Francis received the stigmata. The *Descrizione* is a spectacular example of a book of prints, which are bound collections of pictures that challenge the prevailing book historical belief of the printed book as fundamentally textual. The *Descrizione* provides a unique opportunity to consider how the producers and users of the work tackled this issue of form: it emerges out of a longstanding textual tradition of describing faraway pilgrimage sites, such as the famous accounts by Margery Kempe and Felix Fabri.

This paper focuses on the ways the *Descrizione* plays on the central features of these pilgrimage texts to guide the user’s virtual ascent of La Verna. The *Descrizione*’s continuous engagement of the senses (touch, sound and above all sight) is part of its remediation of the textual tradition: four of the six flaps in the book are of boulders which the virtual pilgrim can lift to reveal hidden moments of Francis’ life, a simulacrum of exploring the mountain site. As in pilgrimage literature, the *Descrizione* frequently blurs past and present, with contemporary travellers depicted alongside Francis, Christ and other historical “visitors” of La Verna. The publication also allows users to mentally reconstruct the site through precise measurements of the chapels and surrounding landscape, a phenomenon likewise found in pilgrimage accounts. Although earlier scholarship argued pilgrimage declined in the 16th century, the *Descrizione*’s remediation of pilgrimage texts suggests a continued interest well into the 17th century.

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