

Judges' Commentary

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An Interpretation of Sebastiano Luciani's San Giovanni Crisostomo
Altarpiece Paintings: The Iconographic Program during the Chapel
Reconstruction Process

This extremely ambitious article offers a new interpretation of the San Giovanni Crisostomo Altarpiece (ca. 1508–1510) by Sebastiano Luciani (Sebastiano del Piombo), a major work by the artist, with relatively little previous interpretation of its subject matter. Based on scrupulous on-site study and extensive examination of documentary evidence, Ms. Suami examined the work from an extremely diverse range of viewpoints, including consideration of the nature of San Giovanni Crisostomo itself, the history of its reconstruction, the relationship between relics owned by the church and the rituals in which they were used, the relationship of subject matter between the altarpiece in question and two other altarpieces in the same chapel, and the social and religious situation at the time of the altarpiece's creation. In this study Ms. Suami succeeded in offering a richly detailed interpretation of the altarpiece and thus we judge this article to be a superb example of art historical research.

Ms. Suami's interpretation of the saint with no specific attributes in the group of saints depicted in the altarpiece is particularly fascinating. While the saint has been variously identified in previous studies, Ms. Suami identifies

him as St. Paul on the basis of the traditions of Byzantine manuscript decoration, and further, given that the Greek words written on the book held by St. Crisostomo are words that frequently appear in the Pauline epistles, Ms. Suami posits that Crisostomo was in the act of annotating the epistles. These findings offer new angles and approaches for future research on this work. While Ms. Suami is specifically a scholar of Italian Renaissance art, she did not overlook research findings on Byzantine art and this breadth of references has clearly informed her new interpretation of the iconography. We highly praise this flexible approach to research, one that ranges broadly in its consideration of sources and the historiography of related disciplines.

Ms. Suami went on to offer a deeply meaningful interpretation of the altarpiece's creation based on the historical situation at the time. She surmised that this altarpiece was consciously created in conjunction with the decorative programs of the two other altars in the chapel during its rebuilding process, and that they were created with the hope of a peaceful unification between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Ms. Suami has previously written about the subject of altarpiece decoration at the time of chapel reconstruction in *Bijutsushi* 159, specifically about Tullio Lombardo's marble altarpiece for the Bernabò Chapel. That article shares this article's stellar quality. We also greatly anticipate the results of the large comprehensive study on iconographic programs of the three altar decoration programs in the reconstructed San Giovanni Crisostomo, including her thoughts on "Diletti Altarpiece Paintings", another work by Giovanni Bellini.

For these reasons we have awarded the *Bijutsushi* Article Prize to Ms.
Suami.