



Note from the Editor-in-Chief

With the sixth issue of *Fenestella. Inside Medieval Art*, the *Special Issue* section is introduced alongside the *Articles* section, in which brings together studies arising from international conferences. Since conference sessions are public and their schedules are disseminated online, any reviewer would be able to identify the author of a submission within seconds. For this reason, the Editorial Board has elected to apply a single-blind peer-review process to texts submitted to *Special Issue*, while maintaining a double-blind procedure for submissions to the *Articles* section.

The international and transdisciplinary debate surrounding peer review has grown to such an extent that it has become an academic field. This is neither the place to evoke or summarise that debate, nor it is my intention to do so. It is, however, worth noting that certain disciplinary areas within the exact sciences are now embracing public review procedures, involving one or more appointed reviewers and possible contributions from other scholars. This transparent and participatory approach aims to restore centrality and independence to the academic community, in response to the policies of the few publishers who control the majority of academic journals.

Reflections on peer review must nonetheless be shaped by the intrinsic characteristics and needs of each broad research area. In the case of the humanities, to which the History of Art belongs, the number of journals is steadily increasing—both long-established publications and new ones such as *Fenestella*—managed and supported directly by universities. This detaches the dissemination of research from any form of commercial compromise or external pressure. A case in point is the *Riviste Unimi* platform (riviste.unimi.it), which offers editorial boards workflow-management software, a centralised copyediting and typesetting service, long-term hosting, and the institutional framework of the University of Milan. The resulting full independence of each journal's Editorial Board, Advisory Board, and Editorial Team already provides a fundamental basis for selecting editors and reviewers solely according to scientific criteria.

In this context, fully open review procedures merit serious consideration, yet they still face obstacles. For a discipline such as Art History, the publisher's typeset version has a significance that goes far beyond its aesthetic appearance. It embodies a carefully calibrated relationship between text, notes, images, captions, and bibliography, emerging from an ongoing process of textual and editorial refinement. Circulating online a provisional typescript for public review inevitably results, at a later stage, in the coexistence of two versions of the same study, almost certainly with different pagination (a critical issue in a discipline in which it is customary to cite precise page ranges within a contribution), and likely with variations in the title, the text, and the number and arrangement of the images.

Another obstacle concerns language. The humanities regard multilingualism as a strength rather than a limitation, since each language reflects a culture, a historical tradition, a geographical landscape, and a distinct approach to thought and research. Yet in today's global and interconnected world, those who do not write in English are inevitably placed at disadvantage, especially in any review procedure intended to involve the international scholarly community. The issue will be mitigated to some extent by AI, whose rapidly improving translation tools allow authors to produce papers

in proficient English without specialised language skills, or to obtain near-instant translations of texts written in most world languages. However, this can only partially mitigate the problem. Arguments initially conceived and expressed—for example, by an Italian in Italian or a German in German—inevitably lose nuance through translation into English, with a concomitant simplification and polarisation that materially affects art-historical analysis.

Closely connected to the question of language is the fact that humanities research is deeply rooted in the history, culture, and specificities of a region. This, in turn, may limit the effectiveness of evaluation by the broader international scholarly community when compared with that of reviewers possessing specialised knowledge of the relevant context.

Finally, in the specific field of Medieval Art History, the scholarly community is comparatively small, and public peer review risks being shaped by professional and personal networks, thereby compromising impartial judgement. It may also prompt reviewers to produce fully elaborated reviews, entailing a level of time and labour that would likely discourage many from undertaking the task.

For these reasons, while closely following developments in the debate on peer review and taking into account the guidelines of ANVUR (*Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca* - National Agency for the Evaluation of Higher Education and Research), *Fenestella* will, in the immediate future, continue to adopt a double-blind procedure for the *Articles* section and a single-blind procedure for *Proceedings*.

With this in mind, it is with great pleasure that *Fenestella* hosts in the 6-2025 issue the contributions originating from the international conference *La scultura lombarda di XII secolo nel dibattito storiografico europeo* (Parma, 5-6 December 2024), held as part of the activities of the PRIN 2022 project *Deconstructing "Lombard Identity"*. For a *New Vision of Romanesque Sculpture in the North Italian Context*, a project undertaken by the research units in Medieval Art History at the Universities of Pavia (Principal Investigator), Parma, and Milan. With regard to the perspectives and subsequent developments of the research carried out - now presented in the following pages - I entrust the task of illustration to the introductory notes by Giorgio Milanese (University of Parma). These are preceded by a statement from Luigi Carlo Schiavi (University of Pavia) addressing the premises and scientific objectives of the PRIN 2022 project, as well as by an overview of the ongoing cataloguing activities prepared by the research fellows involved in the project: Eleonora Casarotti, Jessica Ferrari, and Filippo Gemelli.

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