

Interactive comment on “St. Francis and Giotto: the saint and the artist who started the ecological movement” by Ann C. Pizzorusso

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The paper “St. Francis and Giotto: The Saint and The Artist Who Started the Ecological Movement” by Ann C. Pizzorusso builds on the study of paintings of the Italian painter Giotto (c.1270 – 1337) as seen by a geologist. Ann C. Pizzorusso puts these painting in a context of shifting perceptions of man and nature; first, at times of the artist’s life (and following centuries), and second, at contemporary times. The paper illustrates communication between the geological reading of artistic presentations of landscapes that were painted seven hundred years ago and contemporary veneration of a famous theological practitioner (St. Francis, 1181/82 – 1226). The strength of the paper is found in the first element, its weakness in the second element. Notwithstanding that this dichotomy must be adjusted for a scientific paper, the cognitive, affective and spir-

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itual sense-making that the author communicates “. . .analyze the rock formations and marvel at the mystery of the Earth’s topography, it takes an artist to move me to tears by presenting their unique view of the landscape. In doing so, an artist presents the Earth using the visual tool so powerful it can move the most naïve viewer. . .” (line 42-45) – is a valuable observation; that is worth to communicate, too. Other than geological thinking, this paper requires insights in social science, humanities and arts to consider: (1) why Giotto and other painters have chosen (new) elements of style; (2) how the viewer may have perceived them; and (3) to hypothesize about the cultural impact that may have come from it. This cross-section of various elements makes the paper a fascinating reading - currently, more like an essay than a scientific paper-which motivates the reader to deploy different angles of view. The geological reading of Giotto’s paintings allows identifying those features within the geology of central Italy that likely did inspire the artist. The respective parts of the paper (sections 1.6-1.11) are ‘rock-solid’, although it remains hypothetical what the artist did notice for inspiration. Anyhow, this part of the paper is central to illustrate how geology and arts interact; a subject of which the Ann C. Pizzorusso has compelling experiences. These observations should be moved further to the forefront of the paper. The part of the paper (sections 1.1 and 1.3) that describes shifts in (religious) arts of the thirteens century in junction with shifts in the ecclesiastic hierarchy (Gregor IX – Nicolas IV) would benefit from literature references, in general. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if these references could support the author’s conjectures about the modified perception of the thirteens-century-viewer. The given description of the perception of a viewer living in the thirteens century seems probable. Nevertheless, the description may be tainted by projecting modern world-views; a possible bias that should be considered. Therefore, as far as possible, evidence from historical sources should be added that support the conjectures. Depending on the amount of evidence that can be added, this part of the paper should be repositioned compared to the observations that are reported. Sections 1.2, 1.4 and 1.12 may be taken as an account of spiritual respect (veneration). As such, they have little function in a scientific paper. Nevertheless, they illustrate nicely the cen-

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tral hypothesis of the author, namely that 'that Giotto's (and others) artistic style was a powerful communication vehicle'. Notwithstanding that this hypothesis seems valid (and likely can be proven), the author states "[t]he unlikely partnership of St. Francis and Giotto, two revolutionaries, changed Western piety, art history and natural philosophy (line 456-457)". This claim goes a little far for two persons who never met because they lived a generation apart. Such a strong claim – already presented in the title that possibly can be improved - would need correspondingly compelling evidence; a little more than mentioning a political move of an ecclesiastic representative in the twentieth century (line 441 ff). Nevertheless, this political move may be interpreted as identifying St. Francis as a/the pioneer of ecological thinking within catholic traditions. Summarising, sections 1.2, 1.4 and 1.12 should be reviewed in great depth if kept as part of the paper. Overall, the corpus of literature added at the end of the paper seems too limited for the subject. The reader should benefit from a robust corpus of references. The language and the style read well. The essay-like style of the paper is suitable for this piece of scholarly work that is more explorative than affirmative. The paper should be publishable after revision.

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