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Sassetta's Madonna della Neve. An Image of Patronage

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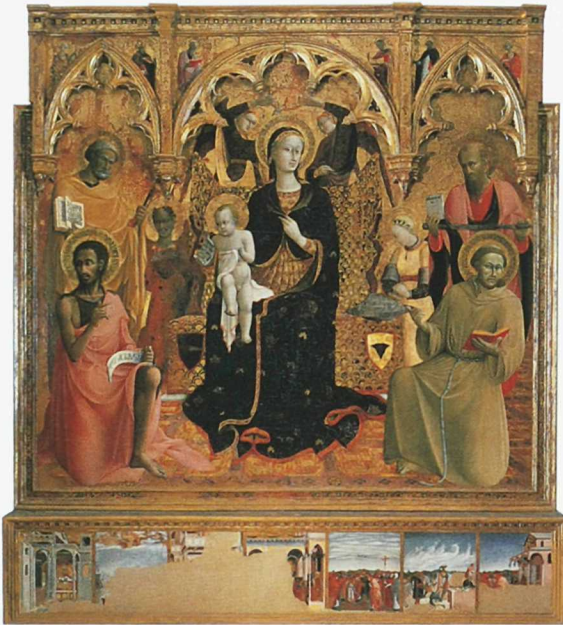
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Sassetta was the pioneering artist in Siena at the beginning of the fifteenth century and the Madonna della Neve altarpiece (1430-1432) stands out as his most innovative work. It adorned an altar in Siena Cathedral, for which it had been commissioned by Ludovica Bertini,

the widow of a former head of the cathedral-works. In order to achieve her chapel, Sassetta's patroness mobilised a wide circle of influential friends including Cardinal Antonio Casini, a grand patron of the arts.

Stemming from a wealth of new archival discoveries, this book explores the personal motivation of the patroness, her family and her social network, and subsequent implications of such for Sassetta's altarpiece and his career. It will be seen that bonds of patronage also linked the Madonna della Neve to Sassetta's later commission for the cathedral of Grosseto, and to Masaccio and Masolino's altarpiece for Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. Sassetta's Madonna della Neve is the most potent example of a series of altarpieces that would topple the traditional civic and episcopal

monopoly of patronage in Siena Cathedral, making way for an individualised stake by private patrons and heralding a spiritual and artistic renaissance in the city.



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