



The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object

Cynthia Hahn

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From skeletons to strips of cloth to little pieces of dust, reliquaries can be found in many forms, and while sometimes they may seem grotesque on their surface, they are nonetheless invested with great spiritual and memorial value. In this book, Cynthia Hahn offers the first full survey in English of the societal value of reliquaries, showing how they commemorate religious and historical events and, more important, inspire awe, faith, and, for many, the miraculous.

Hahn looks deeply into the Christian tradition, examining relics and reliquaries throughout history and around the world, going from the earliest years of the cult of saints through to the post-Reformation response. She looks at relic footprints, incorrupt bodies, the Crown of Thorns, the Shroud of Turin, and many other renowned relics, and she shows how the architectural creation of sacred space and the evocation of the biblical tradition of the temple is central to the reliquary's numinous power. She also discusses relics from other traditions—especially from Buddhism and Islam—and she even looks at how reliquaries figure in contemporary art. Fascinatingly illustrated throughout, this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the enduring power of sacred objects.

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