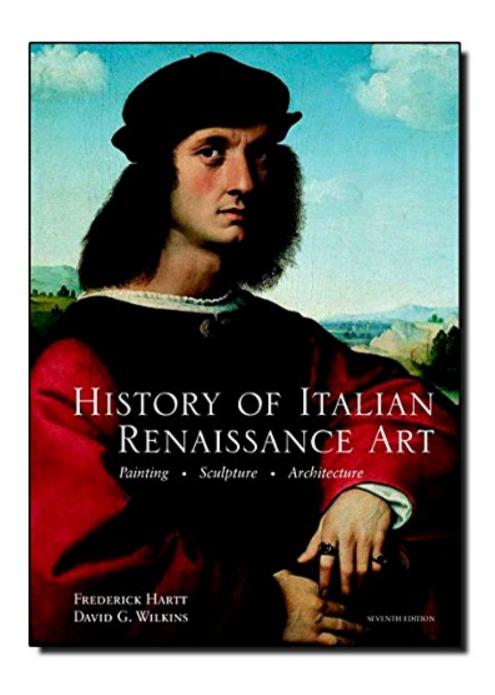


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DAVID G. WILKINS Silver Lake, New Hampshire, December 2001

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Silver Lake, New Hampshire, December 2001

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Simply One Of The Best Books Ever!

By David A. Plouffe

I don't give 5-star ratings very often. I reserve them for only the best, and this is indeed the best book on the Italian Renaissance. I received both my BA and MA in Art History and this was the text used for my Renaissance classes. The book does not read as a textbook for those looking for leisure reading. It reads like

a novel and is written in easy to understand language. Chapters are broken down by time period. There are a TON of pictures! I would say 50% of the book is pictures and 95% of those are in color. There are a few B&W pictures but they are of rather obscure sculptures or paintings.

The book was originally written by Frederick Harrt who was one of the 'Monument Men' in World War II who went around Italy documenting art, missing, damaged, or otherwise. He has passed away, but David Wilkins has kept up on the new editions with the current scholarship being done in Renaissance Art. Whether you get this as a textbook for a class, or leisure reading, a coffee table book perhaps, or even a Christmas book for a hard-to-buy-for relative, it is well worth the money.

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135 of 981 illustrations in color in 4th ed., 50 % in 5th, & all needed in 6th

By Eugene Tenenbaum Reluctant Reader

Everything that should be in color is only in the 6th edition with 736 pages. Approx. 50 % of the illustrations in the 5th edition (768 pp.) is black and white including a few important paintings what disappoints a bit. Accurately illustrating the visual arts when presenting or analyzing is essential. But fewer than 14 % of all illustrations is in color in the 4th edition (ISBN: 0133933806). Otherwise, it is exquisite including its beautiful printing and binding. All the illustrations occupy approx. a half of the 696 pages, but the text is what counts. Maps of the centers of Rome, Florence and Venice on the inside of the front cover and on the flyleaf show many important landmarks, but architecture appears to be a bit underrepresented.

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Complete Reference for Italian Renaissance Art

By Linda

This a beautiful book. It is complete and definitive for reference to Italian Renaissance Art. The photographs are clear and the information is concise. I used this for my graduate Italian art history class. I am keeping this book and will not be selling it back!

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When Frederick Hartt's History of Italian Renaissance Art was first published, more than thirty years ago, it was an epoch-making achievement. This large volume with its dozens of color plates presented for the reader the story of Italian Renaissance art as it was loved, appreciated, and understood by one of the great scholars of the period. Before his death in 1991, Frederick Hartt was able to revise the book for two later editions. In 1994 a fourth edition offered minor revisions to Hartt's text and illustrations in the light of new discoveries and the restoration of the Sistine Chapel and other works. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this new edition has been undertaken to update and enhance Hartt's original vision. I think he would have been especially pleased with our ability to offer color illustrations throughout the book, uniting the images with the text in a manner not possible before.

As I set about updating Hartt's vision, my intent was to maintain the integrity of the story that he had first told so enthusiastically many years ago. The organization of the text as he planned it has been retained, and many of the works illustrated are the same. The new works added here were chosen to expand and enhance Hartt's original vision.

The history of Italian Renaissance art is a vast and complex subject that could be told in a number of ways. Frederick Harrt's view was a traditional one that had its roots in the first history of Renaissance art, written by Giorgio Vasari in the sixteenth century. Like Vasari, Hartt emphasized the art that was created in Florence, Rome, Siena, and Venice. While art historians have discovered much that is interesting and important in the art created in Naples, Milan, Ferrara, and other centers during the Renaissance, to include this material in extensive detail would have detracted from Hartt's thesis that Renaissance art evolved in Florence and had its most fulfilling later development in Rome, Siena, and Venice. His belief that each of these cities evolved a unique style was the basis for his organization; as such, chapters were devoted to the developments in each center. Such an approach remains appropriate, for the story of each city's art has an internal integrity that is based on its own independent political and social structure and development.

Hartt's model, Vasari's Lives of the Artists, was based on an interest in understanding each artist as a creative individual. While such a biographical and focused approach is still rewarding, it means that each artist is isolated and discussed independently. This organization provides readers with a strong sense of the personality and artistic development of each individual, while at the same time requiring that they re-create the original, overlapping chronology of events and works.

While choosing to maintain Harrt's traditional framework, I have at the same time introduced a number of changes. Illustrations have been deleted to make way for other works that enrich our understanding of the diversity of the period. While Hartt emphasized religious art, I have added a number of secular works. Also new is a series of portraits of significant patrons and personalities of the period. Extracts from Renaissance texts have been added to enhance the historical context. The emphasis throughout, however, remains as Hartt envisioned it—on the work of art and on the individual creator rather than on the broader social and historical context within which these works were created.

One of Harrt's goals was to help the reader see the works of art as he saw them through the use of evocative

and poetic language. As an example of his descriptive powers, note how quickly he captured the effect of Parmigianino's Vision of St. Jerome (see fig. 18.54): "In the darkness that veils any possibility of establishing spatial relationships, rays of light flash from the Madonna's head and shoulders like shards of ice." Again and again his words send the reader back for another, closer look at the work of art.

My own love for this period was established when I first visited Florence in 1963 in preparation for a position at the University of New Hampshire. Although at the time I thought of myself as a medievalist in training, my job required that I teach a full semester course on Italian Renaissance art. As a result I devoted extra time to Italy and Renaissance art; when I left Florence that summer, I knew that I would be going back. I owe a special debt to all my teachers at the University of Michigan: Ludovico Borgo, Eleanor Collins, Marvin Eisenberg, Ilene Forsyth, Oleg Grabar, Victor Meisel, Clifton Olds, James Snyder, Harold Wethey, and Nathan Whitman.

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DAVID G. WILKINS Silver Lake, New Hampshire, December 2001

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