



Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction

Geraldine A. Johnson

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Artists like Botticelli, Holbein, Leonardo, Durer, and Michelangelo and works such as the Last Supper fresco and the monumental marble statue of David, are familiar symbols of the Renaissance. But who were these artists, why did they produce such memorable images, and how would their original beholders have viewed these objects? Was the Renaissance only about great masters and masterpieces, or were women artists and patrons also involved? And what about the "minor" pieces that Renaissance men and women would have encountered in homes, churches and civic spaces? This Very Short Introduction answers such questions by considering both famous and lesser-known artists, patrons, and works of art within the cultural and historical context of Renaissance Europe. The volume provides a broad cultural and historical context for some of the Renaissance's most famous artists and works of art. It also explores forgotten aspects of Renaissance art, such as objects made for the home and women as artists and patrons. Considering Renaissance art produced in both Northern and Southern Europe, rather than focusing on just one region, the book introduces readers to a variety of approaches to the study of Renaissance art, from social history to formal analysis.

Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction Details

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Kamons says

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Simon says

Aside from the final chapter on Michelangelo, I find it chaotic and superficial. I have been left with the impression that the author doesn't really know what she's talking about.

Daniel Wright says

After reading a number of books about art that attempt, in some misguided post-modern way, to deal with it in an unconventional fashion, it is always somewhat refreshing to come across one that guides the reader through the subject in a methodical and no-nonsense way. This book does precisely that covering all the major themes and artists concisely but effectively.

Brian says

Geraldine Johnson's no-nonsense approach to Renaissance art contrasts the very different contexts in which Renaissance paintings, sculpture and crafted objects can be viewed. On the one hand she examines attitudes at the time: the very specific demands of the patrons who commissioned these works, and the uses to which the works were put, whether devotional, political, familial or domestic. On the other hand she considers the reverence with which the same objects are regarded nowadays by gallery-goers gazing through a post-Romantic lens in which the artist is seen as a creative genius in conflict with the world, giving expression to his troubled personality through his art

The scope of the book is limited by the parameters of the series in which it belongs. Nevertheless, Johnson does an excellent job, focusing on a series of individual artworks and outlining how they embody the economic, religious and political forces of the time. Clear, precise and informed.

Rebecca says

A good overview of the issues surrounding Renaissance art, illustrated with examples and case studies of artworks, artists, or even cities, rather than a summary of main artists, styles and centres of art etc. I found this more useful for my purposes but it might not be right for other people. The only thing I found annoying were the patronizing conclusions to each chapter, really could have done without them!

mahatmanto says

bagi orang eropa, babak yang disebut renaissance itu bener-bener ada. punya awal dan akhir, dapat diterangkan kapan dan di mana bermula dan ke mana menyebar. babak renaissance ini bagi kebanyakan orang dianggap sudah "jadi", sudah "selesai" sebagai unit peristiwa.

tapi buku ini melonggarkan anggapan itu. kapan dan di mana bermula sengaja dikaburkan. tidak bisa dipastikan, misalnya di kota florence, ketika keluarga medici berkuasa di sana.

renaissance di buku ini masih menempatkan seni sebagai ranah sentral dalam babak sejarah eropa yang dinamai renaissance ini. perubahan-perubahan dan inovasi di bidang peralatan [navigasi, pertahanan, transportasi, komunikasi...dst.] kurang mendapat perhatian. padahal, bagaimana sebuah gerakan sosial yang historis dapat berlangsung bila hal-hal material itu tidak terlibat?

ditulis oleh seorang perempuan, maka ia juga menyisipkan pertanyaan "apakah renaissance juga dialami oleh para perempuan?". sebuah pertanyaan masa kini yang diajukan pada masa lalu yang dianggap sudah jadi.

akibatnya, babak renaissance itu pun mengalami pengayaan tafsiran.

semua uraian disajikan secara singkat dan padat.

pada hemat saya, ini cocok untuk memberi gambaran awal mengenai bagaimana babak historis renaissance ini ditetapkan batas-batasnya, dan apa saja yang menarik dipetik dari sana untuk masa kini.

David Roberts says

The book I read to research this post was Renaissance Art A Very Short Introduction by Geraldine A Johnson which is a very good book which I bought from kindle. This book tells you all about the Renaissance period with emphasis on some of the best pictures of that era. There were a lot of wealthy people who could the best artists lots of money and in effect sponsor them. Many artists realized that if they were to become good at drawing people they had to study subjects like physiology. Many pictures were of religious scenes and were like art pieces in their own right. This was an era where if a portrait was drawn by a top artist it would definitely resemble the subject. Before this era though wealthy people did commission portraits but often they were difficult to recognize the subject. In religious pictures artists used carefully selected imagery that many people nowadays don't understand. One thing my art teacher at school told was that in a typical picture Jesus or God would be portrayed as biggest then the angels and saints. This had the effect that God seemed closer than anything else. Gradually artists understand this and started working in perspective with the closest elements biggest and the furthest elements smallest. All this occurred in the 15th & 16th centuries.

Simon says

Great summary of what makes Renaissance art distinct as compared to its predecessors. I read this book as a preparation to a trip to Florence and Venice and it made me appreciate the visits to museums and galleries much more than I would have without the book.

Kamal says

I have enjoyed several books from this series, but this one is my favorite. The author treats Renaissance art with respect, but doesn't elevate it as the greatest artistic achievements ever, as many commentaries do. In fact, the author explicitly examines the idea of the artist-as-rockstar, which we take for granted today, but didn't really exist before the Renaissance. Instead, she tells a story of power and civic rivalry--the contexts that produced much of what we consider high renaissance art. My only real critiques of this book is that it didn't spend that much time discussing the Northern Renaissance, and the book lack footnotes and other forms of marginalia that would have helped to substantiate its claims.

Richard says

For someone with a passing interest but only a fairly rudimentary knowledge of art and art history ("but I know what I like..."), and who needs a quick crash course in Renaissance art, this "Very Short Introduction" does an excellent job of introducing key works, genres, individuals, and contexts. Johnson's book, which is let down only by its over-frequent use of bland and even occasionally platitudinous summary statements at the end of sections and chapters, is very well organized (by themes, roles, and contexts, rather than by time or place, while never losing a sense of the chronology and geography of Renaissance art), easy-to-follow, and well illustrated: just what I was looking for.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions #129), Geraldine A. Johnson
Artists like Botticelli, Holbein, Leonardo, Durer, and Michelangelo and works such as the Last Supper fresco and the monumental marble statue of David, are familiar symbols of the Renaissance. But who were these artists, why did they produce such memorable images, and how would their original beholders have viewed these objects? Was the Renaissance only about great masters and masterpieces, or were women artists and patrons also involved? And what about the "minor" pieces that Renaissance men and women would have encountered in homes, churches and civic spaces? This Very Short Introduction answers such questions by considering both famous and lesser-known artists, patrons, and works of art within the cultural and historical context of Renaissance Europe. The volume provides a broad cultural and historical context for some of the Renaissance's most famous artists and works of art. It also explores forgotten aspects of Renaissance art, such as objects made for the home and women as artists and patrons. Considering Renaissance art produced in both Northern and Southern Europe, rather than focusing on just one region, the book introduces readers to a variety of approaches to the study of Renaissance art, from social history to formal analysis.

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Sisi says

This book serves as a nice recap of my art history class. It would be an easy and fun read for people who has a little bit but not too much background in art history. Not really for complete beginners. A few main points:

1. The craft involved in making an image or object, together with its function and iconography should be valued equally.
 2. The altarpiece tradition serves an important role in Renaissance religious life.
 3. Renaissance art, whether sacred, secular, or somewhere in between, was full of stories.
 4. Artists modify and adapt reality for their own purposes, artistic or otherwise.
 5. The idea of "Renaissance men"
 6. Women in Renaissance had roles as patrons, artists and subjects.
 7. Images of mythological figures such as Venus or Icarus, and Classical genres like the marble portrait bust or the bronze statuette, these objects were an important part of wealthy 15th- and 16th-century beholders.
 8. The sculpture placement in Piazza della Signoria reflects the frequent power shift in Renaissance Florence, especially between the Republican government and the Medici.
 9. Vasari is the first art historian; Michelangelo was the first artist whose biography was written when he was alive.
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Amy Jane says

These Very Short Introductions are great. Though short this was surprisingly informative and broad-ranging. It's pocket size makes it great for travel or just having in your bag. My only criticism - black and white plates mean you have to look pictures up to fully appreciate them.

Rajat Narula says

A simply-written introduction to art from renaissance period. The author keeps it basic, provides a lot of illustrations, and lets readers know the reason the art is special. At no point, does it get a bit much for the uninitiated.

AC says

This series which can be dubbed "X for Dummies with Short Attention Spans" -- and which therefore suits

me to a 'T' -- is, like Oxbridge scholarship generally nowadays -- uneven. This seems to be one of the better volumes -- a brief and sober, jargon-free (and free of obvious eccentricities) treatment of Renaissance Art.
