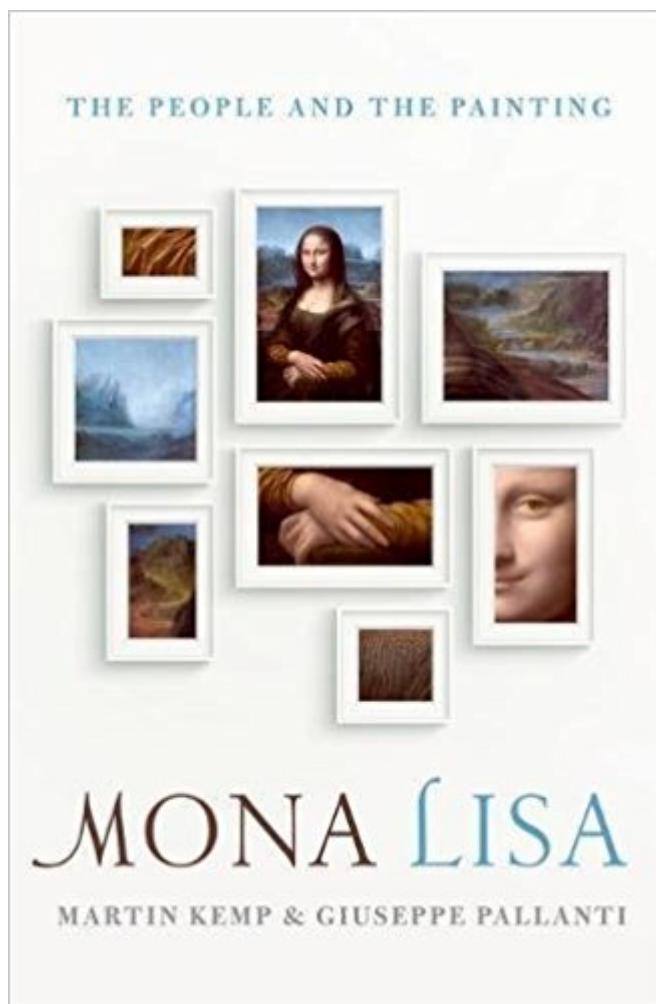


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Mona Lisa: The People And The Painting



Synopsis

Read this book and the world's most famous image will never look the same again. For the world's greatest cultural icon still has secrets to reveal--not the silly secrets that the "Leonardo loonies" continue to advance, but previously unknown facts about the lives of Leonardo, his father, Lisa Gherardini, the subject of the portrait, and her husband Francesco del Giocondo. From this factual beginning we see how the painting metamorphosed into a "universal picture" that became the prime vehicle for Leonardo's prodigious knowledge of the human and natural worlds. We learn about the new money of the ambitious merchant who married into the old gentry of Lisa's family. We discover Lisa's life as a wife and mother, her association with sexual scandals, and her later life in a convent. We meet, for the first time, the illegitimate Leonardo's real mother and find out where he was really born. The tiny hill town of Vinci is placed before us, with its widespread poverty. We find out about the career and possessions of his father, a notable lawyer in Florence. The meaning of the portrait that resulted from these human circumstances is vividly illuminated through Renaissance love poetry and verses specifically dedicated to Leonardo. We come to understand how Leonardo's sciences of optics, psychology, anatomy and geology are embraced in his poetic science of art. Recent scientific examinations of the painting disclose how it evolved to assume its present appearance in Leonardo's experimental hands. Above all, we cut though the suppositions and the myths to show that the portrait is a product of real people in a real place at a real time. This is the book that brings back a sense of reality into the creation of the portrait of Lisa del Giocondo. And the actual Mona Lisa, it turns out, is even more astonishing and transcendent than the Mona Lisa of legend.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (September 1, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0198749902

ISBN-13: 978-0198749905

Product Dimensions: 9.4 x 0.9 x 6.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #124,960 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Visual Arts > Painting #118 in Books > History > Europe > Italy #239 in Books > Arts & Photography > Painting

Customer Reviews

Fascinating... revelatory... with their scholarly and fluent book Kemp and Pallanti have given Lisa Gherardini, mother and silk merchants wife, a new lease of authentic life and re-established the Mona Lisa as an extraordinary painting with ordinary origins. * Michael Prodger, The Sunday Times * Brings the portrait of the enigmatic Lisa into a sharper focus than ever before. * Ross King, Woodstock and Bladon News * [Kemp & Pallanti] marshal meticulous research into the family histories of painter, patron and subject; deep knowledge of the traditions and allusions of Renaissance art; and scientific analyses of the venerated object. * Philip Ball, Nature * A model of clear-headed rationality, succinct, intriguing and marvellously readable. * Michael Bird, Daily Telegraph * This book is state of-the-art informative and will be mightily useful for students. * James Hall, Literary Review * Riveting reading... This book is a veritable mine of information. Beautifully written, it reaches out in an engaging and fluid way to those who know relatively little about the subject, whilst still imparting fascinating new evidence to the more experienced on the origins of the painting, and also about Mona Lisa herself. It is not just a further paean to 'the most famous painting in the world', it also offers to the reader a rich and tantalising picture of the world in which Leonardo da Vinci inhabited, and the huge part that an insignificant bourgeois woman, Mona Lisa del Gioconda, played in history. * Sandra Callard, On: Yorkshire Magazine * This well-researched book is also highly readable: after so many bunkum theories, the sober truth about the Mona Lisa's origins comes across as surprisingly radical and refreshing. * Alastair Smart, Prospect * Elegantly-produced study. * Richard Owen, The Tablet *

Martin Kemp FBA is Emeritus Professor in the History of Art at Trinity College, Oxford University. One of the world's leading authorities on Leonardo da Vinci, he has published extensively on his life and work, including the prize-winning Leonardo da Vinci: The marvellous works of nature and man (1989 and 2006) and Leonardo (2004 and 2011), both of which are also published by Oxford University Press, and most recently La Bella Principessa, written with Pascal Cotte (2010). Giuseppe Pallanti lives and works in Florence, where he is an Economics teacher. He has a passion for archival research and has been researching the history of the Del Giocondo and da Vinci families for many years.

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