



Re-Reading Leonardo

The Treatise on Painting across Europe, 1550-1900

Edited by Claire Farago, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA



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For nearly three centuries Leonardo da Vinci's work was known primarily through the abridged version of his *Treatise on Painting*, first published in Paris in 1651 and soon translated into all the major European languages. Here for the first time is a study that examines the historical reception of this vastly influential text. This collection charts the varied interpretations of Leonardo's ideas in French, Italian, Spanish, English, German, Dutch, Flemish, Greek, and Polish speaking environments where the *Trattato* was an important resource for the academic instruction of artists, one of the key sources drawn upon by art theorists, and widely read by a diverse network of artists, architects, biographers, natural philosophers, translators, astronomers, publishers, engineers, theologians, aristocrats, lawyers, politicians, entrepreneurs, and collectors. The cross-cultural approach employed here demonstrates that Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting* is an ideal case study through which to chart the institutionalization of art in Europe and beyond for 400 years.

The volume includes original essays by scholars studying a wide variety of national and institutional settings. The coherence of the volume is established by the shared subject matter and interpretative aim: to understand how Leonardo's ideas were used. With its focus on the active reception of an important text overlooked in studies of the artist's solitary genius, the collection takes Leonardo studies to a new level of historical inquiry.

Leonardo da Vinci's most significant contribution to Western art was his interpretation of painting as a science grounded in geometry and direct observation of nature. One of the most important questions to emerge from this study is, what enabled the same text to produce so many different styles of painting?

Contents

Introduction: the historical reception of Leonardo da Vinci's abridged *Treatise on Painting*, Claire Farago. Section 1 The Italian Reception: What might Leonardo's own *Trattato* have looked like? And what did it actually look like up to the time of the *editio princeps*?, Martin Kemp and Juliana Barone; Leonardo and the Florentine Academy, Robert Williams; Who abridged Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*?, Claire Farago; On the movement of figures in some early apographs of the abridged *Trattato*, Michael Cole; *Zaccolini and the Trattato della Pittura* of Leonardo da Vinci, Janis C. Bell; The first Italian publication of the *Treatise on Painting*: book culture, the history of art, and the Naples edition of 1733, Thomas Willette. Section 2 The French Reception: The *Vita* of Leonardo da Vinci in the Du Fresne edition of 1651, Catherine M. Soussloff; Poussin as engineer of the human figure: the illustrations for Leonardo's *Trattato*, Juliana Barone; 'A chaos of intelligence': Leonardo's *Traité* and the perspective wars at the Académie Royale, Martin Kemp; Perspective and the Paris Academy, J.V. Field; Leonardo's theory of aerial perspective in the writings of André Félibien and the paintings of Nicolas Poussin, Pauline Maguire Robison; Between academicism and its critics: Leonardo da Vinci's *Traité de la Peinture* and 18th-century French art theory, Thomas Kirchner. Section 3 The Spanish Reception: The *Trattato* in 17th- and 18th-century Spanish perspective and art theory, Javier Navarro de Zuvillaga; Pacheco, Velázquez, and the legacy of Leonardo in Spain, Charlene Villaseñor Black. Section 4 The Dutch, German and Flemish Reception: The reception of Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato della Pittura* or *Traité de la Peinture* in 17th-century Northern Europe, Michèle-Caroline Heck; 'This art embraces all visible things in its domain': Samuel van Hoogstraaten and the *Trattato della Pittura*, Thijs Weststeijn; Rubens and Leonardo on motion: figures, inscriptions, and texts, Juliana Barone. Section 5 The English Reception: The 1721 English *Treatise of Painting*: a Masonic moment in the culture of Newtonianism, Richard Woodfield; The *Trattato della Pittura* and Leonardo's reputation in 18th-century British art and aesthetics, Geoff Quilley. Section 6 The Greek and Slavic Reception: The translation and critical fortuna of Leonardo's *Trattato* in Greece and the Balkans: the manuscript translations of Panagiotis Doxaras, Chrysa Damianaki; The fortuna of Leonardo's *Trattato della Pittura* in 19th-century Poland, Marcin Fabianski; Bibliography of printed editions of Leonardo da Vinci's *Treatise on Painting*, Mario Valentino Guffanti; Index.

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