The Young Leonardo

Art and Life in Fifteenth-Century Florence

Leonardo da Vinci is often presented as the “Transcendent Genius,” removed from or ahead of his time. This book, however, attempts to understand him in the context of Renaissance Florence. Larry J. Feinberg explores Leonardo’s origins and the beginning of his career as an artist. While celebrating his many artistic achievements, the book illuminates his debt to other artists’ works and his struggles to gain and retain patronage, as well as his career and personal difficulties. Feinberg examines the range of Leonardo’s interests – including aerodynamics, anatomy, astronomy, botany, geology, hydraulics, optics, and warfare technology – to clarify how the artist’s broad intellectual curiosity informed his art. Situating the artist within the political, social, cultural, and artistic context of mid- and late-fifteenth-century Florence, Feinberg shows how this environment influenced Leonardo’s artistic output and laid the groundwork for the achievements of his mature works.

Larry J. Feinberg is the Director and CEO of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. He is the editor of two reference volumes on the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, Italian Paintings before 1600 in the Art Institute of Chicago and French and English Paintings from 1600 to 1800 in the Art Institute of Chicago. He has also been the co-organizer and catalog author for several major exhibitions, including The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence; Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream; and From Studio to Studiolo: Florentine Draftsmanship under the First Medici Grand Dukes.
The Young Leonardo

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Florence

Larry J. Feinberg
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Acknowledgments

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