# Painting And Experience In Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer In The Social History Of Pictorial Style (Oxford Paperbacks)

# Synopsis

Serving as both an introduction to fifteenth-century Italian painting and as a text on how to interpret social history from the style of pictures in a given historical period, this new edition to Baxandall's pre-eminent scholarly volume examines early Renaissance painting, and explains how the style of painting in any society reflects the visual skills and habits that evolve out of daily life. Renaissance painting, for example, mirrors the experience of such activities as preaching, dancing, and gauging barrels. The volume includes discussions of a wide variety of painters, including Filippo Lippi, Fra Angelico, Stefano di Giovanni, Sandro Botticelli, Masaccio, Luca Signorelli, Boccaccio, and countless others. Baxandall also defines and illustrates sixteen concepts used by a contemporary critic of painting, thereby assembling the basic equipment needed to explore fifteenth-century art. This new second edition includes an appendix that lists the original Latin and Italian texts referred to throughout the book, providing the reader with all the relevant, authentic sources. It also contains an updated bibliography and a new reproduction of a recently restored painting which replaces the original.

# Book Information

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# Customer Reviews

I find it strange that many people find it strange that one might read a book like this one for fun. Twice in one day I had people approach me and ask me for what class I was reading this, as if there are books one reads only in school and books one reads in real life.I did read this in real life, and I read it for three reasons: 1) I knew this is a highly regarded book in art criticism, 2) it deals with a

period of art history about which I wanted to know more, and 3) it looked like it would be a fun read.My primary reaction to the book upon reading it was: how did the author fit such a huge book into so few pages? There are books that cannot be measured by page count. PAINTING AND EXPERIENCE IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY contains 153 pages of text, with illustrations taking up around a third of those. Despite that, Baxandall is able to pack an amazing amount of information in a very small number of pages. Yet, as dense as this book is, it never becomes anything less than completely readable. It is a very fast read, and not merely because of the small number of pages. Baxandall's contention is that the visual experience of a Quattrocento person (or what he eventually comes to self-mockingly comes to call "a church-going business man, with a taste for dancing") is not one to which we any longer have conceptual access. He laments that we too often approach these paintings with our own conceptual categories in the forefront, and impose these upon the paintings, instead of judging them and perceiving them, as a contemporary would have. His goal in this slender volume is to attempt to reestablish some sense of the pictorial concepts with which a Quattrocento person approaches a painting. In this I believe he succeeds admirably.

exactly what it promises: a key to relating the "raw" evidence of Renaissance social history (contracts, treatises on commercial math, preaching and devotion, social dancing, and--most wonderful--the making and judging of art) to the "raw" evidence of Renaissance picture-making: altarpieces, portable diptychs and other devotional panels, frescoes on convent walls. NOWHERE does Baxandall promise to "unveil" artistic mysteries, or show us the "fun" of Renaissance art. He never panders to his reader's ignorance, or accepts the facile claim that art is about personal genius "expressing itself." If you believe looking at art is a self-sufficient experience purely dependent on your ability to "connect" emotionally or aesthetically with an object made by a genius, that's great, but you won't learn anything from this book, because you know all you need to know already. If, however, you can drop your solipsistic preconceptions about art and ask yourself: WHY were Renaissance pictures made, WHO had them made (guess what? It WASN'T the artists!), HOW were they seen (NOT in museums!), then you're in for an amazingly thoughtful and well documented primer in "how to see as if you were a Renaissance art buyer" (the only buyers that mattered to "Renaissance geniuses," who would have laughed at the modern museum-goer attempting to emotionally connect with "fine art" cut off from its original location and purpose). Baxandall was a great linguist (Greek, Latin, German, Italian, French . . .), as well as a specialist who combined deep curatorial expertise (he knew in precise technical detail how a tree-trunk was transformed into a painted wood statue) and advanced historical analysis.

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