

Self-Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, while also relating these paintings stylistically and conceptually to the artist's *oeuvre*. While some readers might question or qualify Garrard's assertion that paintings in which Artemisia has used herself as a model "are always about her" (124), what this book clearly demonstrates is that her work is also about breaking through barriers faced by early modern women, and that are still with us today. Garrard's savvy connections between early modern and contemporary feminist thought and actions effectively demonstrate this continuum of concerns, and help to explain why Artemisia's art resonates so strongly with viewers today. We can only hope that the *Renaissance Lives* series will bring more female subjects to the forefront so as to demonstrate that Artemisia Gentileschi was not the exception.

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Piero di Cosimo: Painter of Faith and Fable. Dennis Geronimus and Michael W. Kwakkelstein, eds.

Niki Studies in Netherlandish-Italian Art History 12. Leiden: Brill, 2019. xxvi + 320 pp. €127.

The often-overlooked Florentine painter Piero di Cosimo (1462–1522) was finally given his due in 2015 with several major events devoted to his distinctive career, including the presentation of the first major monographic shows on this eccentric and splendid artist. While by no means unknown, Piero was usually considered a well-kept secret in the shadow of such artists as Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci. Organized jointly by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, the 2015 Piero exhibitions nevertheless had different curators, separate catalogues, and a somewhat differing focus (the Florence venue included paintings by Piero's fellow Florentines, while the Washington project included Piero's work only). Together the exhibitions garnered praise for reuniting Piero's works that had been separated for centuries, in particular his mythological scenes created for the wealthy Florentine Vespucci and Pugliese families, for the presence of innovative technical and conservation material, and above all for showcasing the artist's *fantasia*, wit, and ability as a storyteller.

Near the end of the Florentine run, a two-day symposium, titled *Piero di Cosimo: Painter of Faith and Fable*, took place at the Dutch University Institute for Art History (NIKI) in Florence. The conference papers were published in 2019, and include material originally given at the March 2015 Berlin RSA session devoted to Piero, and two other technical papers from conservators who treated Piero's work for the exhibitions. Edited by Dennis Geronimus and Michael W. Kwakkelstein, these

papers offer a diverse and renewed look at an artist noted for his strangeness and wildness by Vasari, but also dubbed “one of the most fascinating painters of the Quattrocento” by John Walker (xii), the second director of the National Gallery of Art.

The contents of the essays presented echo Piero’s complex artistic output. As expected, Piero and religious art are highlighted. Alessandra Galizzi Kroegel discusses Piero’s Marian imagery, simple and sober and in contrast to some of his elaborately coiffed female saints and centaurs. Mary’s role as the *Ancilla Domini* (the handmaiden of the Lord) becomes “an important detail conveying a sense of domestic submission and sweet resignation” (20), and Piero’s choice of attire and a cold palette for the Virgin’s dress is suitable to the theme of self-sacrifice. Kroegel then proposes that Piero breaks with tradition not only in his humble Madonnas, but also in the depiction of the *Immaculate Conception*. Elena Capretti writes on the dialogue between Piero’s Del Pugliese altarpiece today in the Hospital of the Innocents in Florence and a terracotta lunette of the Annunciation by Luca della Robbia now in that cloister, but which was originally placed atop the painted altarpiece. To my knowledge this topic has rarely, if ever, been discussed.

Piero’s highly original storytelling gifts shine brightest in the mythological and allegorical creations for which he is best known. Understanding the arcane stories and identifying their sources has been the most difficult component of Piero studies. This was much discussed in the exhibition catalogues, and is again part of the symposium papers, in essays by Dennis Geronimus, Guy Hedreen, and Ianthe Assimakopoulou. Many compositions include exotic animals, such as lions, a lovable dragon, and the ill-fated Medici giraffe. But even his interpretations of everyday dogs, cows, and birds rival his most fantastical creatures, as found in the exceptionally sympathetic bellowing cows in the *Forest Fire*, and the mournful dogs in the *Death of a Nymph*. Four papers offer innovative interpretations of Piero and his animals; Sarah Blake McHam highlights the large cricket in *Vulcan and Aeolus* and cites Pliny as its source. She then suggests the prominent insect is a reference to painters who created secular subjects interpreted in an imaginative way as well as an emblematic signature.

Roberta Olson focuses on Piero’s birds and identifies each. She rightly suggests that the apprentice Piero is responsible for the many birds in Cosimo Rosselli’s fresco of the *Sermon on the Mount* on a Sistine Chapel wall. While many of Piero’s paintings contain birds, with pigeons and doves the most frequent, the *Forest Fire* probably contains the most in varieties and numbers. She concludes that “nearly all of Piero’s identifiable birds are mentioned in Pliny’s *Natural History*, and the artist portrayed some species solely out of sheer delight, while others are . . . linked to the iconography of their contexts” (126).

Three excellent technical essays provide a revealing look into the artist’s method and how modern scientific innovations can help to reconstruct very damaged works or to reunite long-separated compositions. The volume is rounded out by essays on Piero and Netherlandish painting and Piero’s drawing compared to another Florentine

master, Ghirlandaio, making the sum total extremely valuable for the ongoing study of Piero di Cosimo.

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Leonardo: Discoveries from Verrocchio's Studio; Early Paintings and New Attributions. Laurence Kanter.

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. 144 pp. \$35.

Leonardo: Discoveries from Verrocchio's Studio considers two notoriously knotty questions: what was Andrea del Verrocchio's production as a painter, and what lessons did his star pupil Leonardo da Vinci learn (if any) as a painter from his teacher? The book opens with an excellent overview of the issues by Kanter. As he points out, documents make evident that Verrocchio must have been a painter of some renown. Among the most important of these documents is one from 1485, recording how Verrocchio had been commissioned to paint the *Madonna di Piazza* altarpiece (also known as the Pistoia altarpiece; chapel of the Sacrament, Cathedral of San Zeno, Pistoia), which was complete, or nearly so, before that date. Verrocchio's production as a painter is also apparent from writings of contemporary chroniclers who celebrate him as a painter (as well as a sculptor). Despite this, scholars have long debated the extent to which Verrocchio was a painter and when he began painting; indeed, some even question whether he was ever a painter at all. Vasari sowed the seeds of doubt in his famous account of Verrocchio giving up painting when he saw the angel painted by his pupil, Leonardo, in the *Baptism of Christ* (1460s and 1470s, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). The situation is compounded by the fact that we do not have a single painting definitively by Verrocchio and because most paintings associated with his bottega were made collaboratively, even small-scale paintings.

Kanter offers a refreshing and often convincing set of arguments concerning the attribution of paintings to Verrocchio and Leonardo. As he rightly points out, there is no good reason to suppose we will find Verrocchio's hand in paintings with the same level of quality as his sculptures, or that his paintings display the same set of interests evident in his sculptures. These are proposals that must be proven, not assumed. Kanter also usefully challenges the problematic tendency to attribute paintings deemed of a higher quality to Leonardo and those deemed deficient to Lorenzo di Credi, a painter known to have worked in Verrocchio's bottega. As Kanter notes, this system often collapses when one compares works from Credi's known output to possible attributions. Instead, Kanter searches for "unconscious habits of mind" of each artist, evident across a number of paintings. This leads him to make some intriguing suggestions for early paintings by Leonardo. If correct, Kanter's picture of Leonardo's early production is one far removed from the artist's later paintings in terms of technique (he proposes