



Cosimo de` Medici and the Florentine Renaissance

By Dale Kent

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Cosimo de` Medici and the Florentine Renaissance By Dale Kent

Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464), the fabulously wealthy banker who became the leading citizen of Florence in the fifteenth century, spent lavishly as the city's most important patron of art and literature. This remarkable book is the first comprehensive examination of the whole body of works of art and architecture commissioned by Cosimo and his sons. By looking closely at this spectacular group of commissions, we gain an entirely new picture of their patron and of the patron's point of view. Recurrent themes in the commissions—from Fra Angelico's San Marco altarpiece to the Medici Palace—indicate the main interests to which Cosimo's patronage gave visual expression. Dale Kent offers new insights and perspectives on the individual objects comprising the Medici oeuvre by setting them within the context of civic and popular culture in early Renaissance Florence, and of Cosimo's life as the leader of the Medici lineage and the dominant force in the governing elite.

From the wealth of available documentation on Cosimo de' Medici's life, the author considers how Cosimo's own experience influenced his patronage; how the culture of Renaissance Florence provided a common idiom for the patron, his artists, and his audience; what he preferred and intended as a patron; and how focusing on his patronage of art alters the image of him that is based on his roles as banker and politician. Cosimo was as much a product as a shaper of Florentine society, Kent concludes. She identifies civic patriotism and devotion as the main themes of his oeuvre and argues that religious imperatives may well have been more important than political ones in shaping the art for which he was responsible and its reception.

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Cosimo de` Medici and the Florentine Renaissance By Dale Kent Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1227474 in Books
- Published on: 2000-11-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.21" h x 1.60" w x 8.68" l, 5.46 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 552 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

The most powerful figure in the political and economic life of early Renaissance Florence, Cosimo de' Medici was also its greatest patron of the arts. In her vigorously argued and exhaustively documented study, Kent (history, Univ. of California, Riverside) has examined virtually every facet of Medicean patronage between 1420 and 1464. In doing so, she uncovers and explicates the complex of civic, religious, personal, and dynastic impulses that undergird Cosimo's almost innumerable sacred and secular commissions. The result is a perspective that forcefully manifests the patron's participation while delineating the social and intellectual ambiance in which he flourished and which engendered the values and ideas articulated in the works he commissioned. The complex interaction among patron, artist, and society as well as consumer, creator, and viewer are propounded with a depth of historical understanding not often found in the literature of art history. Kent's immensely learned, contextually alert, and provocative investigation establishes a standard against which all future studies of patronage will be measured. DRobert Cahn, Fashion Inst. of Technology, New York

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Review

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...[A]mbitious...[T]he result of long and admirably meticulous research into a relatively short period. -- *Tim Parks, New York Review of Books*

From the Inside Flap

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