
During the early Italian Renaissance, artists plied their trade to wealthy patrons, often exploring their craft in many mediums. These artists (including Giotto, Bernardo Daddi, Taddeo Gaddi and others), their collaborators, workshops, and protégés developed new iconography and techniques in religious and secular art that changed the face of panel painting and manuscript illumination forever.

Florence at the Dawn of the Renaissance was published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. With over forty-six international lending institutions, the exhibition seeks to reveal the interconnectedness of panel painting and manuscript illumination, their creators, patrons, and influence in the early years of the Florentine Renaissance.

This hardbound exhibition catalog, edited by Christine Sciacca, an assistant curator in the Department of Manuscripts at the Getty, boasts over 200 exquisite, full-color illustrations, often showing intricate detail of these rarely seen works. Sciacca previously authored Building the Medieval World, also published by the Getty (2010).

Each section includes imagery, catalog entries, and essays surrounding pertinent subjects – “Painting and Illumination in Early Trecento Florence,” “Devotional Art, Painting and Narrative,” “The Laudario of Sant’Agnese,” and “Technical Studies: the Early Renaissance Workshop” – which will appeal to the scholar and novice alike. In addition to a number of essays by eminent scholars, this hefty volume includes in-depth entries that provide description and analysis for each catalog entry. The book concludes with a comprehensive list of references, an index of names and titles, and an index of works of art. Art history scholars will appreciate this luscious tome due to the relative dearth of coverage of this particular subject, which was prevalent in the first fifty years of the fourteenth century. Beautiful illustrations will also appeal to students in the arts and humanities, or your average armchair painting and illumination enthusiast.

Serenity Ibsen, Technical Services and Archives Librarian, Pacific Northwest College of Art, sibsen@pnca.edu