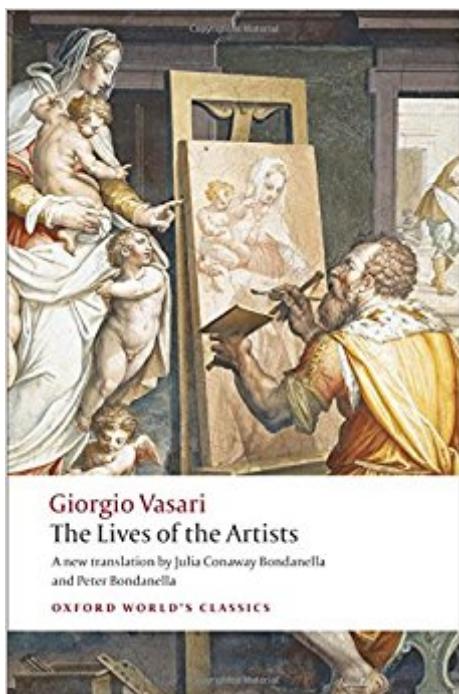


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# The Lives Of The Artists (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

These biographies of the great quattrocento artists have long been considered among the most important of contemporary sources on Italian Renaissance art. Vasari, who invented the term "Renaissance," was the first to outline the influential theory of Renaissance art that traces a progression through Giotto, Brunelleschi, and finally the titanic figures of Michaelangelo, Da Vinci, and Raphael. This new translation, specially commissioned for the Oxford World's Classics series, contains thirty-six of the most important lives. Fully annotated and with a brand new package, *Lives of the Artists* is an invaluable classic to add to your collection.

**About the Series:** For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In studying up for a visit to Italy I noticed that art historians still directly and frequently cite this book, written over 400 years ago. Since Vasari was a contemporary of the High-Renaissance artists, I thought it would be interesting to read his descriptions of artists and their technical development. The book is organized into a series of essays focusing on artists from Cimabue to Titian. In this translation, the editors have included only those artists still believed to have made a significant

contribution. To my surprise, this book was not only informative, but it was also quite entertaining. Vasari focuses mostly on the artistic development of each artist, but frequently strays into fascinating stories about their personal lives. The writing style is surprisingly readable, thanks to both Vasari and the editors. The notes in the back of the book are extremely useful. They point out where Vasari has been proven inaccurate, elaborate on some of Vasari's points, and provide updated locations for some of the works. This book was invaluable during my recent trip to Tuscany and Umbria. It was thrilling to read Vasari's descriptions of great fresco cycles, paintings, and sculptures while I was viewing them in person, whether in the Uffizi in Florence or the Duomo in Orvieto. I cannot recommend this book enough to all art lovers, particularly those who are planning a visit to central Italy.

I read this book in preparation for an upcoming trip to Florence. I am a big Michelangelo fan to begin with, and the idea of reading something written by a contemporary and aficionado of his was intriguing. I was well rewarded for my interests. Vasari clearly idolized Michelangelo and Raphael. That is apparent, but as he did for every other artist's Life he covered, the level of personal detail and anecdotes is invaluable for someone like me looking for the story behind the artists. Artists from each phase of the Renaissance are covered with detail of both their personal and artistic lives. I can say I learned so much from each chapter that I will surely be taking this book with me for reference when I am in Florence. One caveat, I think it would be helpful to have a book with photographs of the works Vasari discusses. Unless you are already up to speed on the major Renaissance works, it is more helpful to visualize them with the assistance of Vasari's descriptions. I found myself running to the internet often to see what he had been talking about. Kick back and relax with this very easy to read and thoroughly enjoyable guide to some of the Renaissance's finest artists.

Vasari's *Lives of the Artist* deserves to be published as one of the world's classics. Unfortunately, the Bondanellas did not translate all of the *vite* and some of the biographies in this volume are abridged. Still, although it contains a few minor errors, this elegant and lively translation of the *Lives* is the best available in English.

If you were to read a modern art history book of the high Renaissance, chances are the author of the book drew at least some of his information from this book written by Giorgio Vasari. Giorgio Vasari was an Italian Renaissance artist who also wrote about the various artists of his time. A contemporary of Michelangelo, Giorgio Vasari's book reads like a Who's Who of Renaissance artists.

For a book more than four hundred years old, the style is amazingly modern and interesting. Vasari has an artist's eye for critiquing another artist's work. His writing style is not boring, whereas many would be reduced to general descriptions like "beautiful" and "amateurish", he dissects the artist's work between strong and weak points, pigments and flesh tones or landscapes vs. portraits or the use of light and perspective. He states the reason why some art or one artist is renowned and others ignored. His judgments have generally stood the test of time. Vasari also weaves in some interesting tidbits and anecdotes of the Artist's life. I found this book more interesting than many modern day Art History books.

Vasari interprets the plastic and architectonic arts (painting, sculpture and architecture) as means for promoting the glory of God, as the artist, in his creative act, emulates the supreme creative act of the deity and is thus brought closer to him. His history of Renaissance, or, in Vasari's terms "modern", art spans from the early medieval masters, such as Cimabue and Giotto, up to the great trimvirate of the high Renaissance, Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo, whom Vasari regards with immense reverence as the greatest artist of all time, a genius who even surpassed the perfection of the ancients, and even nature itself. The history describes the gradual advances inaugurated by Giotto and Cimabue, freeing art from the grip of the artificial and iconographic Gothic style, and the progressive development of mathematical perspective by the likes of Brunelleschi, Masaccio and Piero della Francesca, up to Michelangelo, the genius characterised by "terribilata" and absolute mastery of the arts. A section is also devoted to the Venetian masters Titian, Giorgione and Bellini, though they receive short shrift as Vasari, being a Florentine, does not attempt to conceal his bias towards Florentine art and hostility towards the Venetians. The account is written in highly engaging and vivacious prose, with an occasionally gossipy flavour, as Vasari relates, in charming anecdotes, some of the personal events that transpired in the lives of the artists. Altogether, this is a landmark of art-historical research, compiled at a time when research techniques were extremely unreliable, and when interlibrary loans were unheard-of.

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