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Drawings of the Florentine Painters

Bernard Berenson

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This monumental work, Drawings of Florentine Painters by Bernard Berenson, was named in 2013 by Thames & Hudson one of the "books that shaped art history". Berenson was an influential American art historian of the late 19th and 20th centuries. He specialized in Renaissance Art and was a major force in building the US market for paintings by the Old Masters. American collectors of the time regarded Berenson as the ultimate Renaissance art authority. If he judged a painting authentic, its value was greatly increased. Originally published in 1938, and significantly revised and enlarged by the author in several subsequent editions, the 1970 publication by University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, consists of three volumes. (Heavy 4tos 11 1/4" x 8 7/8". Dark blue cloth stamped in gilt. In slipcase. No dust jackets issued.) Some of the Florentine artists covered in the three volumes are: da Vinci, Michelangelo, Albertinelli, Angelico, Gozzoli, Uccello, Verrocchio, Filippo, Botticelli, Lippi, Garbo, Carli, di Cosimo, Bartolommeo, Falconi, Cungi, del Sarto, Pontormo, Rosso, Manfredi, Rosselli, and Artetino. The first volume, Text (xiv, 367 pp; 12 chapters, 15 appendices), consists of Berenson's description and analysis -- using his own critical method and assumptions -- of the work of the artists. His unique and controversial method grouped paintings according to how he considered the artist handled critical aspects, such as surface texture (labeled "tactile imagination" by Berenson) or the weight and volume of any painted figures. Volume 2, Catalogue (xii, 388 pp.), is an illustrated presentation of works by the Italian painters. Volume 3, Illustrations (400+pp., 1109 plate figures and index), includes illustrated plates of the artists' work, first published by John Murray, and in a limited edition by E. P. Dutton, in 1903. While Berenson published other works, in his lifetime, Drawings of Florentine Painters is considered his masterpiece.

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