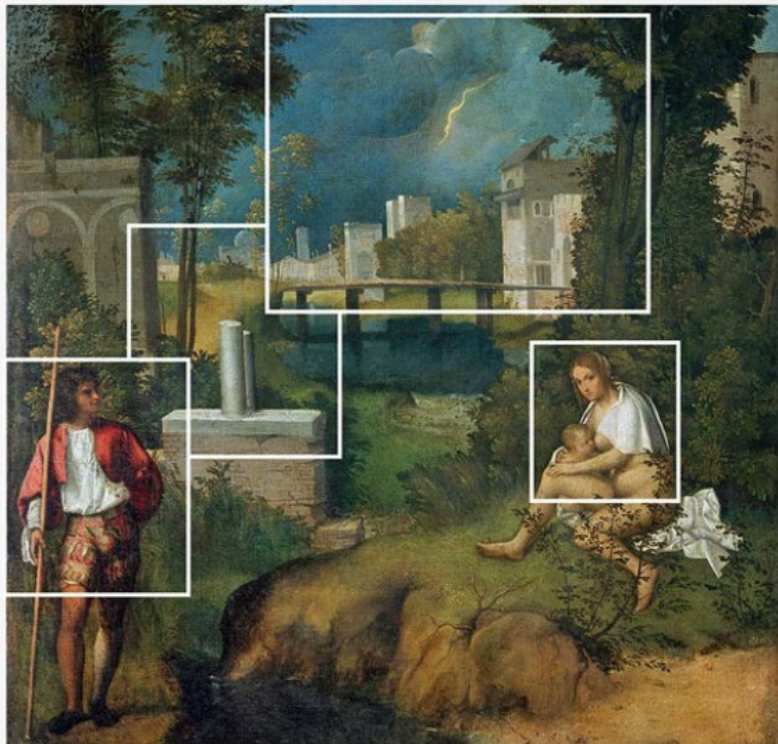


I segreti dei dipinti
RINASCIMENTO ITALIANO

Rose-Marie e Rainer Hagen



TASCHEN

Taschen

I SEGRETI DEI DIPINTI. RINASCIMENTO ITALIANO #BASICART

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I grandi classici sotto indagine

Le gemme della tradizione pittorica italiana analizzate nel dettaglio

Messaggi sfuggenti, leggende celate e verità storiche si nascondono nelle celebri opere del **Rinascimento italiano**, sotto pesanti strati di foglia dorata e una complessa simbologia religiosa. Nonostante l'antico linguaggio pittorico renda talvolta enigmatiche queste tele, **l'analisi accurata e l'interpretazione a opera di esperti** fanno rivivere le immagini. **Riscoprite i capolavori di un'epoca amatissima** grazie a questa affascinante indagine storico-artistica.

Tra scene di guerra, amore e vita, nonché tributi alla scienza, le opere del Rinascimento italiano hanno molto da dire, a chi le sa osservare. È questo il compito di **Rose-Marie e Rainer Hagen**: dissezionare uno per uno i **12 dipinti** inclusi nel volume come veri detective, per offrire nuove chiavi d'accesso al passato.

Dalla *Creazione di Adamo* di **Michelangelo** alla *Battaglia di San Romano* di **Paolo Uccello**, da *San Girolamo nello studio* di **Antonello da Messina** al *Ritorno di Ulisse* di **Pinturicchio**, le opere analizzate costituiscono **la rappresentazione di un'epoca innovativa e brillante, e provengono dalle più importanti collezioni del mondo**, tra cui la Galleria degli Uffizi, il Museo del Prado e la National Gallery di Londra.

Gli autori:

Rose-Marie Hagen è nata in Svizzera. Ha studiato storia e lingue e letterature romanze a Losanna. Dopo aver proseguito gli studi a Parigi e a Firenze, ha insegnato presso varie istituzioni, tra cui la American University a Washington, D.C.

Rainer Hagen è nato ad Amburgo. Si è laureato in letteratura e studi teatrali a Monaco di Baviera e in seguito ha lavorato per la radio e la televisione, ricoprendo il ruolo di direttore di un'emittente pubblica tedesca. Insieme i due autori hanno collaborato alla realizzazione di diversi libri per TASCHEN, tra cui la serie *I segreti dei dipinti* e le monografie *Pieter Bruegel* e *Francisco de Goya*.

La collana:

Ciascun volume della collana Basic Art di TASCHEN comprende:

- Una sintesi dettagliata che ripercorre cronologicamente la vita e l'opera dell'artista, soffermandosi sulla sua importanza a livello storico e culturale
- Una biografia concisa
- Circa 100 illustrazioni a colori con didascalie esplicative

#BasicArt

SANDRO BOTTICELLI



The conjunction of mine owners and mining interests, or perhaps – who knows! – the joining in wedlock of lovers, was the occasion which prompted Botticelli's *Primavera*. This, in any case, is generally assumed. Nor is it unlikely either, although undated, the style of the painting is that of Botticelli's other works of this period.

It was usual in upper-class circles to provide newly-weds with a fully furnished home, including works of art. The painting was later listed in Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco's inventory, so that scholars now suppose it was executed for the younger Lorenzo (rather than for Lorenzo the Magnificent, as previously thought); it hung in the antechamber of the master bedroom.

Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, like his powerful cousin and in keeping with family tradition, was a patron of philosophy and the arts. The great humanist Marsilio Ficino supervised his education, while the poet Poliziano dedicated verses to him. Besides the *Primavera*, Botticelli painted *The Birth of Venus* and *Pallas and the Centaur* for Lorenzo. For 30 years, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco was entirely dominated by his powerful and more "magnificent" cousin, who made him ambassador to

the pope and gave him the task of conveying the official congratulations of the ruling house of Florence to the newly crowned French king. At the same time, however, Lorenzo did everything he could to prevent his younger cousin from growing powerful. Tensions arose between them, and rivalry. When the Medici were expelled from Florence after the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco was permitted to stay. He abandoned the Medici family name, calling himself "Popolano", after the "populist" party, instead. He died in 1503, at the age of 40.

He married at the age of 19, a time of life that is frequently compared to spring. Spring, too, or *Primavera*, is the title by which the painting is commonly known today. It was first described by the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari in the 16th century: "Venus, adorned with garlands by the Graces, announces the Spring." During the 17th and 18th centuries the painting was called *The Garden of the Hesperides*. According to the ancient myth, golden apples grew in this garden. They were guarded by a dragon, and by the Hesperides, daughters of the Titan Atlas. There is no dragon here, and whether the dancing women really are Graces, or even Atlas's daughters, is a matter of some dispute. Venus stands at the centre of the painting. Zephyrus is the figure on the right, blowing pleasant breezes that bring eternal spring.

The goddess Flora scatters her flowers, while on the left, the god Mercury keeps watch, sheltering the garden against threatening clouds.

Besides obvious references to fertility and spring, there are two hidden allusions to the name of the bridegroom. On the right, laurel trees sway in the wind; their Latin name was *laurus*, in which contemporaries would have heard *Laurentius*, the Latin name for Lorenzo. Venus's golden apples are here painted as oranges, known in antiquity as the "health fruit": medical mull. From here to the name Medici is hardly very far. Allusions of this kind were the joy of an educated public.

Chloris

Various 15th-century art buffs let it be known that the features of members and friends of the Medici family could be identified in the faces of Botticelli's figures. There is no evidence whatsoever to support this claim. At the same time, however, the figures in Botticelli's paintings were certainly known to his contemporaries: not as individuals, but as figures from Greek and Roman mythology.

They knew that Zephyrus, a wind god, was pursuing the nymph Chloris in this picture. The story was familiar enough, recorded by the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC-AD 18), who allowed the nymph to tell the story herself: "Zephyrus caught sight of me, I avoided him, he followed, I took flight; he was the stronger..."

Of course, the pursuit and rape of Chloris had a happy ending; we would otherwise be unlikely to find them in a wedding painting: Zephyrus turned the nymph into the goddess Flora, and married her. Botticelli paints Chloris and Flora as a couple. And indeed from then on, so Flora tells us, she had no reason for complaint:

"I enjoy eternal spring, a radiant season ... At the heart of the land of my dowry lies a fertile garden in the midst of climates ... My noble husband filled it with flowers, saying: 'You, o goddess, shall rule over the flowers!'"

Flora thus became the goddess of flowers; Botticelli's blossoms look as if Flora herself has scattered them. Flora: "I often wished to orient the colours arranged on the ground, but I could not. Together, they were greater than any number could be ... I was first to scatter new seed over countless peoples, before then the earth had but one colour."

There is nothing in Ovid to suggest that flowers sprang from Chloris's mouth when she cried for help. That is probably the artist's own invention. But when the goddess spoke, "spring roses were the breath that passed her lips". Afterwards she ascended "into the mild air, leaving nothing but a light fragrance. One simply knew: a goddess was here."

This lovely story comes from Ovid's *Fasts*, a Roman calendar. Ovid tells a tale about the god reversed on each feast day. Flora's feast day, for example, was called *Floralia*. Botticelli is unlikely to have read the *Fasts*; as the son of an uneducated tanner, he probably could not read Latin. However, it is known that Poliziano, a poet employed by the Medici family, held public lectures on Ovid's festive calendar in 1481. The wedding took place a year later. It is possible that Botticelli was inspired by Poliziano.

The lectures on Ovid were enormously popular, coinciding as they did with the rediscovery by Poliziano's more progressive contemporaries of Classical antiquity. The majority of Greek and Roman writers had been committed to oblivion for over a thousand years. The ancient gods and heroes had been swept aside by the one God, by Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints. But Classical authors now enjoyed a comeback. Their manuscripts were sought far and wide, and large sums were paid

PRIMAVERA - SPRING, C. 1477/1478

for copies. Ancient mythical figures began, in turn, to replace the Holy Family and saints.

In Florence, Poliziano was a major proponent of the rediscovery - or rebirth, for it became known as the Renaissance - of Classical art and literature. His real name was Angelo Ambrogini, born in Montepulciano in 1454. Like many humanist scholars and poets of his day, he gave himself a Latin name after his place of birth, the Latin word for which was *Mons Politianus*. He thus called himself Politianus, or, translated into Italian, Poliziano. It was he who coined the famous dictum: "Athens lies not in ruins, but brought her scholars, mice and men to set up home in Florence."

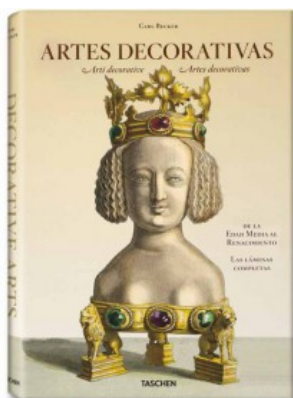
The flowers

Not only was Classical antiquity discovered anew, but Nature too. Botanists have identified the species of flower that Flora, wife of Zephyrus, appears to scatter in the painting. Amongst them are forget-me-not, hyacinth, iris, periwinkle, pheasant's-eye and anemone. Around her neck the goddess wears a wreath of myrtle; in her dress she carries wild roses; in her hair are violets, cornflowers and a sprig of wild straw-



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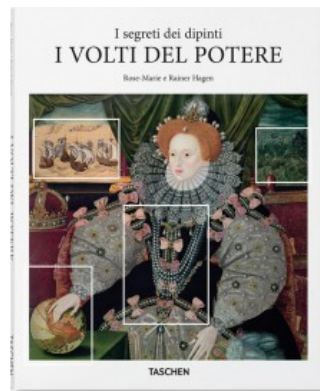
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