



Idea of the Temple of Painting

Giovan Paolo Lomazzo

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Perhaps the most imaginative writer on art in the sixteenth century, Giovan Paolo Lomazzo was also an ambitious painter, well-informed critic, and sarcastic wit: he proved a lively adversary for Vasari, Dolce, and even Aretino. His greatest contribution to the history of art is his special treatment of expression and, in its more mature form, self-expression. The image of the Temple of Painting embodies all his essential thoughts about art. Housing statues of Michelangelo, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Polidoro da Caravaggio, Leonardo, Raphael, Mantegna, and Titian—paradigms of style and, for Lomazzo, the seven greatest painters in the world—it guides the novice in the discovery of a unique style that matches his own temperament. *Idea of the Temple of Painting* (1590), written as a pithy introduction to the encyclopedic *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, demonstrates why art is all about expressing an individual style, or *maniera*. Neither spontaneous nor unconscious, style reflects the rational process of adapting all the elements of painting into a harmonious whole. This treatise also represents a rare historical document. Presiding over an original confraternity of artists and humanists, Lomazzo actively participated in the Milan art scene, which is vividly brought to life by his personal commentaries. This is the first translation of any of his treatises into English.

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