

**A MYSTERIOUS  
MASTERPIECE.  
THE WORLD  
OF THE LINDER  
GALLERY**



# A Mysterious Masterpiece

## The World of the Linder Gallery

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An invitation to join in the discussion not only about a single painting, but also about a unique moment in the history of ideas. **This book** is about one painting – an extraordinary painting. Extraordinary in its detail, extraordinary in its artistic quality and extraordinary because until now it has been virtually unknown. What the painting actually shows is relatively obvious. The painting seems to belong to a world of artists, scientists and collectors. However, there are many subtle and mysterious references within it, not all of which are presently understood. How did this interior come to be painted? Why? For whom and by whom? To show what? Everything about the painting is a mystery, a puzzle. Published in occasion of the exhibition *Galileo. Images of the universe from antiquity to the telescope* (Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 13 March-30 August 2009), this book is based on a conversation about this work of art among specialists and generalists alike trying to unravel these clues. *The Linder Gallery* was painted in Antwerp sometime in the 1620s and is one of a relatively modest number of similar paintings showing the interiors of private collectors' homes. This work of art is a document that holds the clue to understanding the political, intellectual, artistic and scientific ferment of the first half of the seventeenth century. This book is an invitation to join in the discussion not only about a single painting, but also about a unique moment in the history of ideas, a moment when Europe stood at the threshold of a new era of observational astronomy, marked by Galileo's use of the telescope to observe the moon and planets.