



Art History Before English

Negotiating a European Lingua Franca from Vasari to the Present

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- An important reflection on the status of the discipline of Art history in a changing, globalised world where English has become the lingua franca

This book addresses a phenomenon that pervades the field of art history: the fact that English has become a widely adopted language. Art history employs language in a very particular way, one of its most basic aims being the verbal reconstruction of the visual past. The book seeks to shed light on the particular issues that English's rise to prominence poses for art history by investigating the history of the discipline itself: specifically, the extent to which the European tradition of art historical writing has always been shaped by the presence of dominant languages on the continent.

What artistic, intellectual, and historical dynamics drove the pattern of linguistic ascendance and diffusion in the art historical writing of past centuries? How have the immediate, practical ends of writing in a common language had unintended, long-term consequences for the discipline? Were art historical concepts transformed or left behind with the onset of a new lingua franca, or did they often remain intact beneath a shifting veneer of new words?

Includes 10 essays in English, four in Italian, and one in German.

Text in English, German and Italian.

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