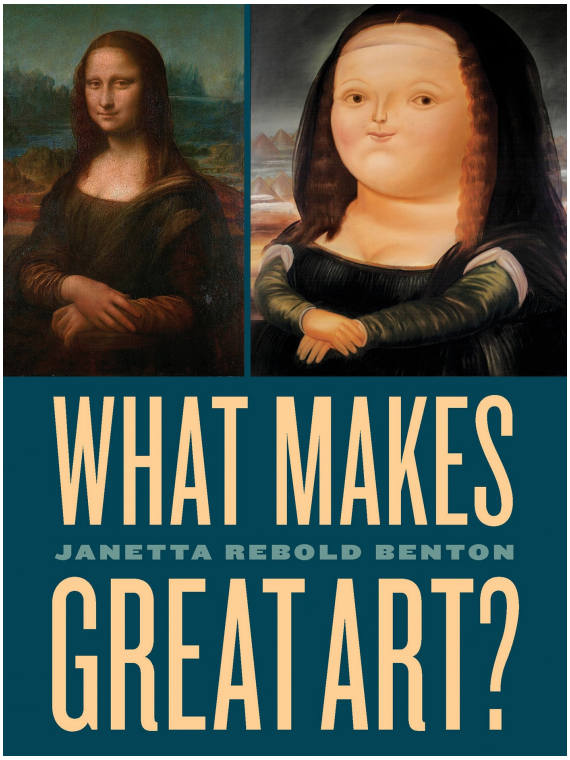
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What Makes Great Art?

Janetta Rebold Benton

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- This book offers a refreshing perspective on the age-old question: What makes great art?
- Rather than offer a single answer, author Janetta Rebold Benton invites readers to come to their own conclusions by exploring different aspects of the subject
- She illustrates her points with carefully paired illustrations that invite side-by-side comparison
- Published in an attractive, portable paper-over-board format, this book will be the perfect impulse buy for museum-goers and an irresistible gift for art lovers
- A frequent lecturer at the Met and Smithsonian, Benton is well-equipped to reach anyone who's ever looked at a painting and wondered how it ended up in a museum

A richly illustrated guide to understanding what makes art meaningful, powerful, and enduring.

For as long as people have made images, they have argued about which ones matter most. Why are some works of art celebrated as timeless masterpieces, while others fade from view? Who decides what counts as "great," and on what grounds—beauty, skill, emotion, originality, cultural power, or something else entirely? In ***What Makes Great Art?***, art historian Janetta Rebold Benton guides readers through this enduring debate. Throughout the book, one hundred carefully paired illustrations invite readers to compare works side by side. Drawing on examples from Western art while acknowledging parallel ideas in other cultures, Benton examines how artists, critics, collectors, museums, markets, and viewers themselves shape the idea of artistic greatness. Moving from classical philosophy and Renaissance ideals to modern neuroscience and contemporary practice, Benton explores whether greatness transcends time and place, whether technical mastery alone is enough, and how emotion, intellect, and personal response factor into our judgments. Rather than offering a single definition of greatness, Benton assists readers in developing their own criteria for artistic excellence. Published in an attractive, giftable format, with full-colour illustrations throughout, ***What Makes Great Art?*** is for anyone who has ever stood in front of a work of art and wondered why it deserves a spot in a major museum such as the Louvre in Paris, British Museum in London, or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Janetta Rebold Benton, Ph.D., is the Distinguished Professor of Art History at Pace University, New York, and received two Fulbright Scholar Awards to Russia and China. She lectured for many years at the Smithsonian, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and elsewhere. Benton is the author of ten art history books, including *Holy Terrors: Gargoyles on Medieval Buildings* and *The History of Western Art*.

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