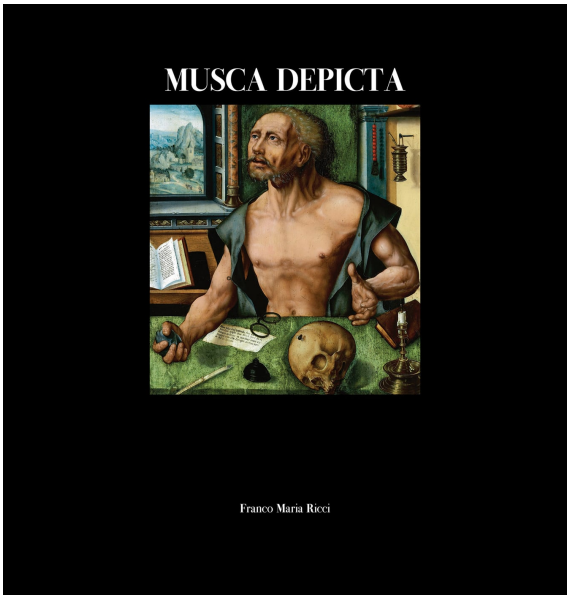
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Musca Depicta

André Chastel

Sylvia Ferino-Pagden

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Giuseppe Olmi

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- Unusual focus on old master paintings
- Contemporary art and Natural History

Between the second half of the 15th century and the 20th century, many painters added a fly to both their sacred and profane compositions. It was painted so convincingly that it seemed real. André Chastel, art historian, reconstructed in this book the history of the fly in painting, here reviewed and updated by Sylvia Ferino-Pagden. At least at the beginning, the fly was introduced as an odd masterpiece, an affirmation of the artist's skill and convictions. A joke for illusionists, which however contains more complex meanings. The fly in painting then evolved. The insect, as we know it, is not well-loved and goes from simply being a nuisance to being the sign of death itself. And over time, *la burla di Giotto*, Giotto's joke, generated a series of symbols where the artist wanted to represent the transience and precariousness of life, of earthly joys. The book chases the flies in picture after picture and recounts how the pictures are strewn with even minuscule signals, plots, and traps which, from time to time, take the form of a flower, an insect, a gem. It is a question of knowing how to interpret them to delve into a story that is also an adventure of the human spirit.

Text in English and Italian.

André Chastel (15 November 1912, Paris – 18 July 1990, Neuilly-sur-Seine) was a French art historian, author of an important work on the Italian Renaissance. He was a professor at the Collège de France, where he held the chair of art and civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy, from 1970 to 1984, he was elected a member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in 1975.**Sylvia Ferino-Pagden** is the former Director of the Picture Gallery at the Kunsthistorisches Museum (KHM, Museum of Art History) in Vienna. She studied Art History at Vienna University and Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. She obtained several research fellowships from Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, St. Hugh's College in Oxford, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence and the Bibliotheca Hertziana (Max-Planck-Institute) in Rome. The focus of her career has been the Italian Renaissance and she has been Curator of Italian Renaissance Painting at the KHM since 1988.

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