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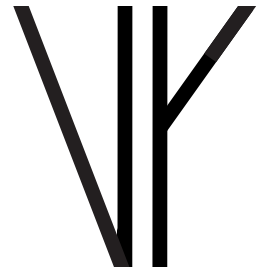
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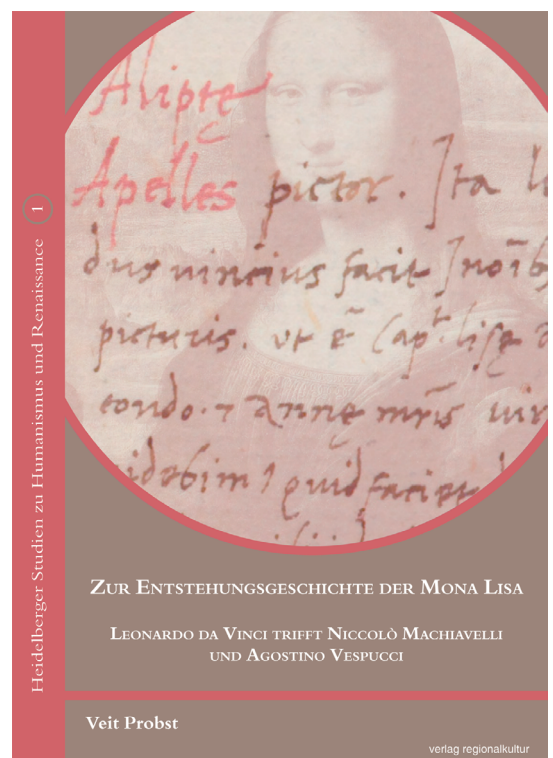
Veit Probst

ZUR ENTSTEHUNGSGESCHICHTE DER MONA LISA

LEONARDO DA VINCI TRIFFT NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI UND AGOSTINO VESPUCCI

Mona Lisa, Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of a young woman is recognised as being the most famous painting in the world. The identification of the subject as Lisa del Giocondo, the wife of the Florentine merchant Francesco del Giocondo, is based upon accounts by Giorgio Vasari (1511-74). His account of the artist's life which first appeared in 1550 is the only source which named both the subject and which also allowed an approximate dating of between 1503 and 1506, which means this identification came nearly 50 years after the painting. There have been doubts up to this day about the validity of these comments, as Vasari is known for his anecdotal tendencies. Vague references from other sources dated 1517, 1525 and 1540 leave a lot of room for interpretation, and have led to a number of different women being identified as the subject of the portrait. Another interpretation is that the portrait represents Leonardo's presentation of the ideal woman.

All doubts about the identity of the Mona Lisa have been dispelled by a discovery that was made whilst cataloguing a Heidelberg incunabulum. The Cicero edition, published in 1477, contains a comment from the Florentine chancellery official Agostino Vespucci, who compared Leonardo with the great classical painter Apelles. He states that Leonardo was currently working on a portrait of Lisa del Giocondo. Vespucci's notes in the margin from October 1503 permit an exact dating of the painting and provide confirmation of Vasari's comment from 1550 that the subject was Lisa del Giocondo. This article, by Dr. Veit Probst, Director of the Library of Heidelberg University, is the first which analyses this new source and which answers a question that has occupied the art history world for over 100 years.



Veit Probst

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