

Leonardo and Michelangelo as Artists and Anatomists

A brief bibliography

There are, literally, thousands of books dealing with these two great artists of the Italian Renaissance. Not to speak of a flood of articles in Art journals, History publications, Psychology and Psychiatry periodicals, special exhibits catalogs, etc. I have chosen to mention these few:

The Life of the Artists, by Giorgio Vassari, first published in 1550. Oxford University Press, paperback edition. This classic work, translated into many languages, written by a contemporary of Michelangelo is invaluable as a source, in spite of its many factual errors. One of the longest biographies is that of Michelangelo, and it is worth reading.

The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, compiled and edited from the original manuscripts by Jean Paul Richter. Two volumes, 800 pages, first published in 1883. Now reprinted in paperback edition by Dover Publications, New York. These two books contain 1566 notes by Leonardo, translated into English from the original Italian, the two languages appearing face to face, arranged by subjects such as sculpture, architecture, anatomy, physiology, astronomy, topography, naval warfare, botany, flying machines, etc, etc... Many B&W illustrations.

Leonardo on the Human Body: The Anatomical, Physiological and Embryologic Writings, By Charles D. O'Malley and J.B. de C.M. Saunders. Originally published in 1952, now reprinted by Dover Publications, New York. This very scholarly book contains most, but not all, of the anatomical manuscripts and drawings of Leonardo. A total of 215 plates from the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle are reproduced, with a fresh English translation of Leonardo's commentary.

Leonardo, the Complete Paintings and Drawings, by Frank Zoellner, printed by Taschen Verlag in 2003. A massive book, weighing almost 25 lb, with astonishing detailed color photographs of every painting currently attributed to Leonardo and of 663 of his drawings. Detailed history of every painting, procedence, restauration, etc. The author is a German scholar, Director of the Art History Institute at the University of Leipzig.

Michelangelo, The Complete Works, by Frank Zollner, Christof Thoenes, Thomas Popper, printed by Taschen Verlag in 2007. Another massive volume with superb illustrations, very similar to the Leonardo book above.

Leonardo, by Frank Zoellner. Paper back edition by Taschen Verlag. Very brief biography and analysis of works with beautiful and accurate color illustrations. Leonardo, the Artist and the Man, By Serge Bramley. Penguin Books, paperback edition. Excellent biography, originally published in French in 1988.

Inventing Leonardo, by A. Richard Turner, paperback edition, University of California Press. A delightful and ironic description of how different ages reinvent Leonardo to make him suit different needs.

Michelangelo, the complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture By William E Wallace, Beaux Arts Editions. A deluxe book, with lovely, admiring text and beautiful color photographs of almost every extant work of Michelangelo.

Michelangelo. The Last Judgment. A glorious restoration, Abrams Press. A multi-authored book, celebrating the recently completed restoration of the great fresco over the main altar of the Sistine Chapel. Magnificent photography.

Michelangelo, by Giles Neret, paper back edition, Taschen Verlag. A slim, beautiful book, quite inexpensive, with many outstanding photographs.

Florence, the Biography of a City, by Christopher Hibbert, Norton Press. Excellent, illustrated history of the city where both Leonardo and Michelangelo spent a good deal of their lives.

The Art of Florence by Andres, G., J.M.Hunisak and A.R. Turner Abbeville Press. A magnificent two volume work, with superb color illustrations and scholarly discussion of the subject. Very expensive, but often found at large discount in book clubs.