

THE WOOD INTARSIA

OF RENAISSANCE ITALY

The Book

The Italian Renaissance, stretching from the 1400s to the 1500s, was a fertile time for all kinds of art, and especially for one discipline that is often overlooked: wood intarsia. Stylized and intricate works of wood intarsia were created using sophisticated techniques. Intarsia developed alongside the so-called “high arts” — painting, sculpture and architecture — that were evolving at the time, and like them, was the subject of theoretical analysis and intellectual debate. Fra’ Giovanni da Verona, creator of one of the great works in this field, was an intarsia artist, of course, but also an architect, miniaturist and sculptor who kept current with all the artistic trends of his time.

His widely admired work for Santa Maria in Organo in Verona is a paradigm of Renaissance wood intarsia and demonstrates a perfect artistic understanding of perspective, reflecting developments in art and knowledge that were then very recent. No wonder that Vasari deemed it “the most beautiful sacristy in all of Italy.” Some of the artist’s signature geometric shapes can be seen in *De Divina Proportione*, Luca Pacioli’s well-known treatise from that same era. There are numerous examples of the way that developments in wood intarsia paralleled those in the high arts. For one, the most famous of the intarsia-lined studies of the day is located in Federico da Montefeltro’s ducal palace in Urbino, a city with a rich mathematical and artistic culture during the Renaissance, and a place where the talents of artists such as Piero della Francesca and mathematicians such as the selfsame Luca Pacioli were nurtured.

With a series of all new photographs that highlight the details of the works of intarsia and showcase their technical and artistic complexity, this book traces the development of this art during a period that straddled the 15th and 16th centuries. It limns the various regional styles that developed from Lombardy and the Veneto down to Naples and Sicily, while also illustrating how all Renaissance artists shared a unique cultural climate and a sophisticated artistic language.

The Editor

LUCA TREVISAN, a scholar of art and architecture, has published various essays on sixteenth and seventeenth century Veneto art, dedicating particular attention to Vicentine architecture and especially to the work of the architect Antonio Pizzocaro. For SASSI he has published *Palladio. The Villas* (2008) and *Vicenza, Arte, architecture and lanscape* (2009).

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