



The Artist Grows Old: The Aging of Art and Artists in Italy, 1500-1800

Philip Sohm



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How does the artist's self-conception change in old age? How does old age affect artistic practice? In this intriguing study, art historian Philip Sohm considers some of the greatest artists of Renaissance and Baroque Italy and their experiences of aging. Sohm investigates how art critics, collectors, biographers, and fellow artists dealt with old painters, what mental landscapes preconditioned responses to art by the elderly, and how biology and psychology were co-opted to explain the imprint that artists left on their art. He also looks carefully at the impact of prejudices, stereotypes, and other imaginary truths about old age.

For some artists, the problems of old age were related to physical decline—Poussin's hands became shaky, Titian's eyesight dimmed. For others, psychological symptoms emerged. The book's cast of characters includes Michelangelo, the hypochondriac young fogey; Titian, the shrewd marketer of old age; the multiphobic Pontormo; and others. With sensitivity and insight, Sohm uncovers what it meant to be an old artist and how successive generations have looked at the art of an old master.



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