of New Media—enough, in fact, to recommend it as a text for graduate courses and for use in scholarship. For one, the book looks at visual rhetoric from the perspective of many different fields, from rhetoric to new media to humanities computing to cognitive studies. Most of the essays are insightful and thoughtfully written. The issues raised surrounding visual rhetoric are topical and often contradict points of contention among scholars and practitioners about what is, how it functions in relation to verbal rhetoric, and how best to talk about and teach it.

The stated focus of the book is to explore “the current status of the ‘eloquent image’ by examining rhetorical and cultural uses of word and image, both historically and currently” (p. 1); of its essays, to mix “theory, critique, and practice to present the assumptions of an interdisciplinary array of artists, critics, and designers about the complex and often contradictory relations of word and image” (p. 2). The authors also provide not only “critiques of[the] dichotomous thinking that renders image as feminine and the word as masculine but also ‘descriptions’ of hypertext and hypermedia that ‘reduc[e] them to ‘purely formal kind of poetics and aesthetics’ or ‘one kind of theory’ or ‘any theory of communication isolated from production and rhetorical contexts’” (p. 2). It is a tall order, indeed, and the reason some scholars may not find the book, in its entirety, useful—the topics are so broad, and its voices are so frequently dissonant.

Two strong chapters lead off the first section, “Visual and Verbal Practices in New Media.” First, Jay David Bolter looks at the way academe has responded to new media and provides a narrative about the way his department has come to understand it. His claim that media critics “are committing themselves to a particular perspective, in which the word is the privileged mode of representation and images are secondary and subsidiary” (p. 24) overlooks, however, N. Katherine Hayles’s Writing Machines, which, balancing images and words, upturns such stereotypes about humanities-based scholarship. The second chapter, Anne Wysocki’s essay “Seriously Visible,” successfully critiques what can only be called Urban-Myths-About-Hypertext: (1) “that hypertextual documents are by their very structure supposed to encourage readers into more active and engaged relationships with texts and thus with each other,” and (2) that documents that “give more weight to their visual rather than their verbal components ought not to be taken seriously or ought to be relegated to children and the illiterate” (p. 37). Hers is the liveliest writing in the volume.

Part 2, “Historical Relationships between Word and Image,” offers an insightful piece by Kevin LaGrandeur about how ancient rhetoricians Aristotle, Gorgias and Horace can help us “think about, to analyze the rhetorical dimensions of . . . images” (p. 117), while Matthew Kirschenbaum’s “The Word as Image in an Age of Digital Reproduction” interrogates Stuart Moulthrop’s claim that “the word is an image after all” (p. 137), from a rather limited perspective—he argues from the premise that the qualities of text that humanities computing scholars value and understand are the qualities that must be found in images and could be value and understood by all other scholars (p. 149). The argument works this way: images are not texts because they do not behave as texts do for humanities computing experts.

Essays in Part 3, “Perception and Knowledge in Visual and Verbal Texts,” explore visual rhetoric from the perspective of cognitive studies. The most satisfying comment, perhaps in the book, is made here by Nancy Barta-Smith and Danette DiMarco in “Same Difference: Evolving Conclusions about Textuality and Media.” In challenging claims about the “shift from print to visual ‘writing’ with the advent of new media capabilities” (p. 159), they say that “we may find that the most revolutionary ideas about writing and new media emerge as mixtures of existing text, voice, and image, that is as evolving combinations rather than definitive conclusions about textuality and new media” (p. 175). At that moment, theirs are the voices of clarity.

The final section, “Identities and Cultures in Digital Design,” includes essays relating to feminist and cultural studies and virtual reality. Of these, the articles by Gail Hawisher and Patricia Sullivan and by Ellen Strain and Gregory VanHoosier-Carey are the most useful to scholars.

In all, the book’s polyvocal, complex approach to visual rhetoric makes for a good text to follow or supplant those like Nicholas Mirzoeff's An Introduction to Visual Culture and will animate a few scholars into energetic discussions about images and words, eloquent or not.

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MASACCIO: SAINT ANDREW AND THE PISA ALTARPIECE


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The appearance of a man of outstanding creative talent is very often accompanied by that of another great artist at the same time and in the same part of the world so that the two can inspire and emulate each other. . . . How true this is we can see from the fact that in the same period Florence produced Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Paolo Uccello, and Masaccio, each of whom was an outstanding artist and through whose efforts the crude and clumsy style which had preserved up to that time was finally discarded.

—Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Artists (2nd Ed., 1568)

Vasari’s far-reaching biography of Italian artists Le Vie de’ più eccelenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani (The Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors), first published in 1550 (and revised in 1568), remains the principal source regarding his contemporaries and earlier Italian Renaissance artists. The extent of this biographer’s influence is particularly revealing when we turn to an artist like Masaccio (1401–1428). Born Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Mone Cassai, Masaccio (the name is generally translated as “Sloppy Tom”) was so devoted to his work, according to Vasari, that “he refused to give any time to worldly causes, even in the way of dress.” This comment provided the name history chose for him. Vasari’s praise, on the other hand, laid the foundation for sources today that mention Masaccio as one of the first Italian painters to use the science of perspective to create the illusion of 3D space in paintings. Indeed, his mastery of light and one-point perspective was so convincing for his time that scholars say it contributed to the development of the Florentine Renaissance style of painting. Sadly, Masaccio died mysteriously at the age of 27. We can only speculate on what he might have accomplished if he had survived to experiment with oil paint, a new technology that fascinated artists in the decades following his death.
Published by the Getty Museum, *Masaccio: Saint Andrew and the Pisa Altarpiece,* by Elliot R. Rowlands (Senior Researcher, Wildenstein and Company, New York), is a compact monograph that embeds Masaccio's overall accomplishments into its analysis of the multi-paneled painting of which the Getty's *Saint Andrew* panel once formed a part. Rowlands explains that this altarpiece is one of the truly great polyptychs in the history of Italian Renaissance art. Produced in 1426 for a chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Pisa, the work offers a particularly effective vantage point on Masaccio, being one of two works by the artist we can date precisely, and the only painting of his that was documented. Rowlands's focus on the commission for the multi-paneled altarpiece includes details on its patron and program. These are alongside speculations about its original location and the role the church friars played in the actual commission. In sum, each existing panel offers some perspective, and the composite presents a sense of context as well as a sense of how the community contributed to historical works we look at today. Appreciably enhancing the mix is the compelling information detailing all we have learned through conservation efforts and a section on the life of the *Pisa Altarpiece* after it was dismantled.

*Saint Andrew* (like other known panels) illustrates that artists of this time aspired increasingly to transform the 2D surface into the naturalism of a 3D reality. Notations to this effect in the Getty piece include the use of light to create the appearance of space and perspectival cues in modeling the cross and the book the saint holds. Other surviving panels that are examined include the central panel of *The Virgin and Child,* which has been slightly cropped, three predellas, six of the 12 saints and four side panels. All are considered in light of speculation on unknown sections of the altarpiece. In this way Rowlands conveys that our knowledge of their original setting and arrangement is quite limited. Indeed, there are nine competing opinions today on the correct overall arrangement for the one-third of the painted area of which we have no trace. Interestingly, in light of Vasari's role in forming later views of Masaccio, the only eyewitness account of the piece in situ is found in Vasari's revised edition (1568) of his *Lives.* Vasari's detailed description, published in the year that the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine underwent reconstruction, suggests he examined the work firsthand before the renovation, which lasted until 1574. The new construction totally altered the location, lining the walls with altarpieces by the then-contemporary Tuscan painters. Most of these remain in the church to this day.

The overall appeal of *Masaccio: Saint Andrew and the Pisa Altarpiece* stems from this author's ability to give the reader a sense of an artistic community that included Masaccio. Rowlands conveys this by juxtaposing this master's work with that of his influential contemporaries. For example, *The Tribute Money,* a work that shows how observation has heightened the mimetic illusionism power of paintings, is said to be one on which Masaccio and Masolino collaborated. Historical studies generally attribute the main action to Masaccio, while the head of Jesus is widely considered to be the work of his senior partner, Masolino. Although Masolino was 17 years older, the painters, according to Rowlands, worked simultaneously rather than sequentially. In fact, however, there is no evidence of their true relationship, and it seems quite likely that Masolino gave Masaccio benefit of his extensive artistic experience with altarpieces, perspective and the depiction of artistic space. Equally fascinating are the sections outlining Donatello’s influences. Donatello’s inspiration is convincingly presented through the referenced pieces (e.g., Masaccio’s evocative *Virgin and Child,* 1426, suggests a debt to a piece attributed to Donatello, *The Madonna and Child with Four Angels,* 1420–1425). Indeed, throughout Masaccio’s oeuvre, the sculpture of Donatello had a profound effect that brings a sense of humanness to Masaccio’s work. We can easily imagine these artists in their studios exchanging ideas, since the works compared were completed over several years.

One aspect worthy of note is the care that was taken in printing the book. As a person who is attracted to the visual language of art, I always appreciate materials that acknowledge the degree to which art history is enhanced by visual documentation. This book succeeds admirably in its visual presentation. For example, in many art books, handsome foldouts are tucked within the pages and, while useful to some degree, impede the flow of the reading process. Here, instead, the author’s view of the altarpiece reconstruction is carefully folded into the back cover. When unfolded, the map lies next to the printed pages for easy reference. Although it was a bit small, I truly appreciated how easy it was to keep turning the pages without having to fumble for the foldout.

In summary, this book serves its purpose well. Included in the Getty’s Museum Studies on Art series, it is a wonderful resource on this exceptional artist. Rowlands brings a great deal of expertise to his examination as he recounts the paintings’ religious themes, their histories, Masaccio’s commissions, the subsequent history of the panels, and how art historians came to identify them. Numerous footnotes offer the reader abundant leads to more comprehensive literature, such as contributions by Beck, Joannides and Strehlke. Readers will also appreciate the range of visual documentation used to illustrate the work of Masaccio and his contemporaries. Finally, reading through the book brings to mind that popular views of art history are often limited to generalizations that lose track of important historical figures. This monograph gives Masaccio his due. Still, certain devices would have been helpful. In particular it is unfortunate that the book does not have an index. This omission makes it difficult to return to a particular section when it comes to mind later. Still, all in all, Rowlands conveys why many scholars rank Masaccio as the greatest master of early Italian Renaissance painting. The achievements of Masaccio, quite revolutionary in his day, are clearly worthy considering in light of others (e.g., Alberti, Brunelleschi and Donatello) that came to mind when we reflect on the founding fathers of the Renaissance.

**Bibliography**


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