



# **A Short History of the Italian Renaissance (I.B.Tauris Short Histories)**

*Virginia Cox*

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The extraordinary creative energy of Renaissance Italy lies at the root of modern Western culture. In her elegant new introduction, Virginia Cox offers a fresh vision of this iconic moment in European cultural history, when – between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries – Italy led the world in painting, building, science and literature. Her book explores key artistic, literary and intellectual developments, but also histories of food and fashion, map-making, exploration and anatomy. Alongside towering figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Petrarch, Machiavelli and Isabella d'Este, Cox reveals a cast of lesser-known Renaissance protagonists including printers, travel writers, actresses, courtesans, explorers, inventors and even celebrity chefs. At the same time, Italy's rich regional diversity is emphasized; in addition to the great artistic capitals of Florence, Rome and Venice, smaller but cutting-edge centres such as Ferrara, Mantua, Bologna, Urbino and Siena are given their due. Each court and city, Cox argues, pursued its own distinctive version of the Italian Renaissance, animated by a lively civic rivalry that pushed cultural innovation to ever-new heights of ambition and achievement. Fired by this emulative urge, the great ruling dynasties of the age, from the Medici and the Sforza to the Este and Gonzaga, poured their vast wealth into architecture, art, spectacle and patronage of learning, leading to results that continue to inspire us. As the author demonstrates, women played a far more prominent role in this exhilarating resurgence than was recognized until very recently – both as patrons of art and literature and as creative artists themselves. 'Renaissance woman', she boldly argues, is as important a legacy as 'Renaissance man'.

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