



Piero della Francesca: Artist and Man

James R. Banker

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Largely neglected for the four centuries after his death, the fifteenth century Italian artist Piero della Francesca is now seen to embody the fullest expression of the Renaissance perspective painter, raising him to an artistic stature comparable with that of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

But who was Piero, and how did he become the person and artist that he was? Until now, in spite of the great interest in his work, these questions have remained largely unanswered. *Piero della Francesca: Artist and Man* puts that situation right, integrating the story of Piero's artistic and mathematical achievements with the full chronicle of his life for the first time. Fortified by the discovery of over one hundred previously unknown documents, most unearthed by the author himself, James R. Banker at last brings this fascinating Renaissance enigma to life.

The book presents us with Piero's friends, family, and collaborators, all set against the social background of the various cities and courts in which he lived - from the Tuscan commune of Sansepolcro in which he grew up, to Renaissance Florence, Ferrara, Ancona, Rimini, Rome, Arezzo, and Urbino, and eventually back to his home town for the final years of his life. As Banker shows, the cultural contexts in which Piero lived are crucial for understanding both the man and his paintings.

From early masterpieces such as the Baptism of Christ through to later, Flemish-influenced works such as the Nativity, we gain a fascinating insight into how Piero's art developed over time, alongside his growing achievements in geometry in the later decades of his life. Along the way, the book addresses some persistent myths about this apparently most elusive of artists. As well as establishing a convincing case to clear up the long controversy over the year of Piero's birth, there are also answers to some big questions about the date of some of his major works, and a persuasive new interpretation of the much-debated Flagellation of Christ.

This book is for all those who wish to know about the development of Piero as man, artist, and scholar, rather than simply to see him through a series of isolated great works. What emerges is a thoroughly intriguing Renaissance individual, firmly embedded in his social milieu, but forging an historic identity through his profound artistic and mathematical achievements.

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