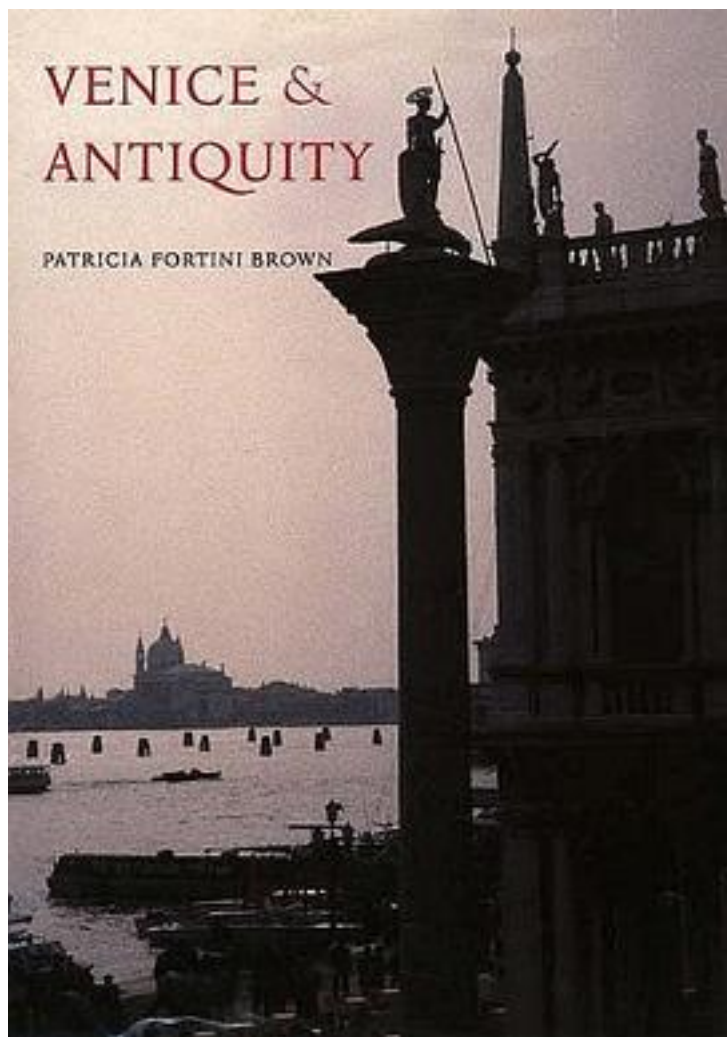


Venice and Antiquity



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Venice was unique among major Italian cities in having no classical past of its own. As

such, it experienced the Renaissance in a manner quite different from that of Florence or Rome. In this pathbreaking book, Patricia Fortini Brown focuses on Venice's Golden Age -- from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century -- and shows how it was influenced by antiquity, by its Byzantine heritage, and by its own historical experience. Drawing on such remains of vernacular culture as inscriptions, medals, and travelers' accounts, on more learned humanist and antiquarian writings, and most important, on the art of the period, Brown explores Venice's evolving sense of the past. She begins with the late Middle Ages, when Venice sought to invent a dignified civic past by means of object, image, and text. Moving on to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, she discusses the collecting and recording of antiquities and the incorporation of Roman forms and motifs into its Byzantine and Gothic urban fabric. She notes, as well, the emergence of a new imperializing rhetoric in its historical writing. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, Brown observes the personal appropriation of classical motifs and prerogatives to celebrate not only the state, but also the individual and the family, and the fabrication of a lost world of pastoral myth and archaeological fantasy in art and vernacular literature. Through the adoption of a literary and architectural vocabulary of classical antiquity in the sixteenth century, civic Venice is shown to claim for itself an identity that is universalizing as well as unique. Brown thus weaves the visual arts into a tapestry of historical and aesthetic sensibilities that embrace both the public and private spheres and the "high" and so-called "minor" arts, giving voice to those who created and participated in the culture that was Renaissance Venice.

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目录:

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