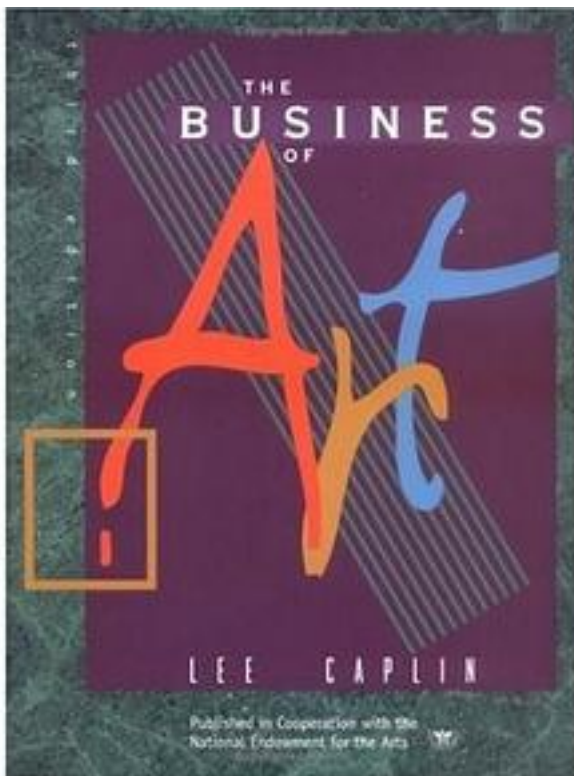


The Business of Art



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Contracts are the most informative records we have about the nature of commissioning prestigious works of art in the Renaissance. The Business of Art provides a framework for interpreting these important documents by surveying a body of contracts and related records concerning altarpieces and frescoes painted in Italy from the early fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. One of the distinctions of this important book lies in its quantifying of contractual information: it focuses attention away from individual commissions and emphasises the patterns and procedures that

characterised the activity of commissioning and its development over time. Michelle O'Malley structures her inquiry around a trio of fundamental questions concerning the language that framed contract terms, the ramifications of contract stipulations for production and finance, and the means used to transmit information, particularly visual information, between a painter and his client. At the heart of the book is an analysis of the implications of the monetary decisions made by contracting parties. Set against a consideration of the background of the economic life of the period, the study widens the focus on commissions undertaken in Central Italy - which has been the subject of most of the research on contracts - to include in the analysis commissions from Venice and the Veneto, Lombardy, and Rome and the Papal States. It considers some of the most well-known works of the Renaissance, as well as little-studied and lost altarpieces and frescoes. In taking a fresh approach to the study of contracts and commissioning, *The Business of Art* demonstrates the fundamental quality of negotiation, involving the equal input of both parties, to the gestation of a new work of art. It underlines the contributions made by both parties, working together, to deciding such issues as the approach to the production of a work, the costs involved in its creation, and the details of its subject matter.

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