
REVIEWED BY: Andrzej Dziedzic
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L'amour de l'art: Érotique de l'artiste et du spectateur au XVI siècle examines the intricate relationship between the artist, the works of art, and the spectator during the Renaissance. Sixteenth-century painters often used perspective as they began seeing the canvas more as a window to a scene rather than a flat surface. Proportions became far more realistic, and several innovative painting techniques were developed, including sfumato and chiaroscuro, which significantly improved the realism and depth of the paintings.

By juxtaposing texts and images, Wajeman brings to light the highly seductive power of visual arts were believed to be endowed with and the strong influence they exerted on the viewer. The art of that historical period was created not only for our sensory perception, but also to arouse love and desire in the eye of the beholder for whom it was not uncommon to fall in love with the work of art while admiring it. Both in the title of her book and throughout the chapters, Wajeman uses the term l'amour de l'art, which can be translated into English as "the love of art," and that exemplifies the inseparable link between the creator of the work of art, its consumer, and the work of art itself. This implicit esthetics of love, generated primarily by paintings and sculptures, was an integral part of the sixteenth-century definition of art.

The main objective of the book is to show the extent and the intensity of the seductive power of art. The proliferation of erotic and provocative images in Renaissance Italy, France, England, and other countries further underlines the breadth of the artists' and the spectators' preoccupation with various manifestations of love, such as desire, affection or esteem, among others.

The book is divided into two parts: part 1, "Creation," focuses on the artist; and part 2, "Reception," focuses on the spectator. Each part contains several chapters devoted to specific aspects of the "love of art." In chapter 1, "Amor pictor, amans pictor, amor picturae," Wajeman provides an inquisitive examination of the origins of the parallel between art and love. Using the ancient paradigm of paintings and sculptures, she convincingly demonstrates to what degree Renaissance painters used models inherited from medieval physiology, lyric poetry and Neoplatonic philosophy. More specifically, the interconnections between love and art are explained through ancient figures of love painter, "l'amor pictor," and lover painter, who in many cases was the poet himself. One of the elements, which contribute to the thematic richness of Wajeman's book, is the inclusion of numerous relevant and well-selected anecdotes. One of the anecdotes, used in chapter 2, tells the story of Apelles, a renowned painter of ancient Greece, falling in love with the king's mistress who served as a model for his painting. In the third chapter, "L'Art et le pinceau," the etymological proximity between the words "pinceau," which means paintbrush, and "pénis" is analyzed to show how early modern texts linked creation and sexuality. According to legends, many Greek and Roman painters and sculptors used women as their models and early modern artists followed in their footsteps. Since art became mainly the man's domain, painters became seducers, and the women they painted were relegated to the role of desirable creatures. Female painters were rare and rarely talked
about. Pliny mentioned several of them, Boccaccio told the story of three of them in *De mulieribus claris*, and Christine de Pizan praised them in *La Cité des Dames*. It is in the fourth chapter, "La peinture, un genre féminin," that Wajeman focuses on the concept of the beauty of images associated with the beauty of women, both of which possess seductive powers. If the artist is a man while the object of his art is a woman, then the question she proposes to investigate is to determine whether the process of artistic creation mimics human generation, an intriguing hypothesis she tests in the fifth chapter, "L'Art une conception masculine," making references to authors such as Ovid, Montaigne, and Aristotle.

The second part of the book mirrors the first part, but the perspective changes and the focus is on the spectator, rather than the painter. In chapter 6, "Physique de la réception," Wajeman explains how new artistic representations of the body (naked, profane, and formed according to antique canons) rid themselves of many of the strict imperatives of Christian spirituality. This, in turn, often led to increased interest in agalmatophilia, that is love evoked by a statue, a surrogate for a real person, and often encompassed Pygmalionism in the form of love for an object of one's own creation. Having examined the erotic power of images, Wajeman then asks what exactly causes the spectator to fall in love with the object of art. In order to answer this question, she looks into the physical and metaphysical causes of this attraction in chapters 6 and 7, "Métaphysique de la représentation" and "Esthétique de la réception." In the final chapter, "La conception féminine, un contre-modèle," the author claims that a painting or an image, being the object of sexual desire, can turn produce its identical copy, mirrored by childbirth. Referring to sixteenth-century beliefs that images can in fact influence the formation of the fetus, Wajeman shows to what extent pregnant women have a relationship with works of art that differs from that of other spectators.

*Lamour de l'art: Érotique de l'artiste et du spectateur au XVI siècle* not only goes well beyond a study of selected works of art and selected literary texts, but also shows how the seductive power of art continues to affect our contemporary understanding. The book is thoroughly researched, well documented and amply illustrated. It will no doubt interest literary scholars, art historians, and anyone else interested in artistic, intellectual, and literary culture of the Renaissance.


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Xavier Prévest’s truly authoritative work about the eminent Renaissance jurist Jacques Cujas has received four major awards, among them the *Prix Corbay* of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. Prévest's doctoral mentors, Anne Rousselet-Pimont and Jean-Louis Thireau are agreed that Prévest’s book is the most comprehensive and authoritative work on Cujas to appear in contemporary times. This book includes an exhaustive introduction to Cujas and his times, a meticulous biography, as well as a thorough overview of his works and their reception in posterity. The volume of Cujas's erudition and productivity was such that most critics seem to have recoiled at the prospect of writing about him. Prévest's linguistic, legal, and historical training equipped him to analyze works and to speak very helpfully to our questions about Cujas, his works, and his