

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-to-give-books-on-art-11574442033>

BOOKS | BOOKSHELF

What to Give: Books on Art

Cammy Brothers on books about Leonardo, Pablo Picasso and African-American art.

By Cammy Brothers

Updated Nov. 22, 2019 12:41 pm ET

This year marks the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death, and it has resulted in a flurry of exhibitions and publications. Among them, one small book and one very big one, both by scholars who have devoted years of study to Leonardo, stand out.

“Leonardo da Vinci : A Life in Drawing” (Rizzoli Electa, 256 pages, \$40) by Martin Clayton, is a model of clarity and concision. Leonardo's keen observation of humanity and nature, and his imaginative reach, are most evident in his drawings, and this exhibition catalog offers a way into his world. For the full picture, though, we can now turn to a monumental, four-volume set by Carmen C. Bambach, **“Leonardo da Vinci Rediscovered” (Yale, 2,279 pages, \$550)**. With 1,500 illustrations and thorough, scholarly analysis on every aspect of Leonardo's career, the set can be yours for the price of a small luxury handbag.

While drawing was at the heart of Leonardo's achievement, it is no longer the foundation stone of art and architectural training. In architecture especially, a few decades after the advent of digital rendering, drawing is barely taught in schools. Fortunately, there are efforts to keep drawing alive not just as a means to communicate spontaneously—for a quick sketch, nothing beats the cocktail napkin—but also as a way to generate ideas and recording fleeting impressions. **“Architecture Through Drawing” (Lund Humphries, 240 pages, \$99.99)**, edited by Desley Luscombe, Helen Thomas and Niall Hobhouse, offers an excellent compendium of experimental sketches

and finished drawings, alongside essays by architects, critics and scholars addressing the vitality and possibility of drawing for architecture now.



By Cammy Brothers

PHOTO: ANDREW BANNECKER

amateurs and enthusiasts.

Drawing requires paper, a medium easily taken for granted. A short, well-designed and elegantly written book, “*The Art of Paper*” (Yale, 174 pages, \$45) by Caroline Fowler takes us through the early history and development of the medium. Considering how

Observational drawing may have long ago lost its role as the starting point for a would-be artist. But there are few practices that have such an immediate cognitive effect. Start to draw and you start to see the world differently. “*Ways of Drawing*” (Thames & Hudson, 272 pages, \$45), edited by Julian Bell, Julia Balchin and Claudia Tobin, assembles a wide range of recent work, together with essays and drawing exercises on the human form, the city and nature. There is much material here for art students, teachers,

Newsletter Sign-up

Books

Be the first to find out what's new and what's good. Get the weekend book reviews before the weekend.

[SIGN UP](#)

[PREVIEW →](#)

paper was produced and traded, and how artists such as Albrecht Dürer exploited it as a vehicle for his ambitions, Ms. Fowler offers a lively account of why paper matters.

The best museums and exhibitions ask us to rethink what we think we know.

“Caravans of Gold, Fragments of Time” (Block Museum/Princeton, 311 pages, \$65), edited by Kathleen Bickford Berzock, reconsiders the story of the medieval West by shifting the viewpoint substantially south, to the Sahara.

Artifacts in ivory, copper, glass and gold,

from human figures to drinking vessels, register the interactions between cultures on both sides of the Sahara.

While some museums have sought to recast the canon, others write their own story altogether. The Studio Museum in Harlem, through the vision and energy of its director, Thelma Golden, has promoted a wide-ranging array of artists. **“Black Refractions”** (Rizzoli Electa, 232 pages, \$45), edited by Ms. Golden, Connie H. Choi and Kellie Jones, encapsulates the rich and varied set of works by artists of African descent from the 1920s to the present.

As art history expands its borders, it also returns and revises its earlier assumptions. In **“Veiled Presence”** (Yale, 224 pages, \$55), Paul Hills presents a survey of Renaissance art through the lens of drapery, curtains and veils. It is the sort of surprising category that, once recognized, appears to permeate everything.

In **“Roger Fry and Italian Art”** (Paul Holberton, 452 pages, \$140), Caroline Elam considers one of the influential founders of the Burlington Magazine and a crucial

figure in the Bloomsbury group. The book is split between a vivid picture of Fry's intellectual world and a selection of his still-resonant writings.

In the modern era, Suzanne Preston Blier revisits one of Picasso's most famous works in "**Picasso's Demoiselles: The Untold Origins of a Modern Masterpiece**" (Duke, 448 pages, \$29.95). As an Africanist, Ms. Blier reveals neglected aspects of the painting's history, from the sources of Picasso's masks to the identity of his models.

—Ms. Brothers is the author of "Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture."

Copyright © 2019 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.