



# Paragons and Paragone: Van Eyck, Raphael, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bernini

By Rudolf Preimesberger

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The *paragone*—the notion of competition and rivalry among the arts—has been a topic of debate for centuries. It erupted with great force in the Renaissance, with sculptors vying with painters for superiority, modern artists competing with the ancients, and painting challenging poetry. If the traces of this lively conversation are most evident in the literature, the remarkable scholarship presented here demonstrates how the *paragone* was rendered visible also in works of art.

The essays on Renaissance and Baroque art reveal the *paragone* to be a crucial motive and key to the interpretation of some of the most celebrated works of art such as Van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece and Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St. Peter's Basilica. The author's incisive and erudite analysis of social history, biography, rhetoric, art theory, wordplay, and history illuminates these works anew, thus affording a modern audience a better understanding of the subtleties of their composition and meaning. Readers will find surprising insights and unsuspected drama in works of art they may have thought they knew.

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Review

“In Rudolf Preimesberger’s *Paragons and Paragone*, we have a book to celebrate. . . . Just as Preimesberger shows how artists signal their competition with the ancients, their peers, and other media, he likewise reveals his own agonistic ends, as seemingly unyielding visual mysteries give way to the subtleties of his mind and pen.”—*Renaissance Quarterly*

About the Author

Rudolf Preimesberger is professor emeritus at the Freie Universität Berlin.

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