



# Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History (Research on Homosexuality)

*Whitney Davis*

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## **Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History (Research on Homosexuality)** Whitney Davis

Find original research and interpretive studies of the relations between homosexuality and the visual arts. Evidence for the role of homosexuality in artistic creation has often not survived, in part because the direct expression of homosexuality has often been condemned in Western societies. *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* presents examples of contemporary art historical research on homoeroticism and homosexuality in the visual arts (chiefly painting and sculpture) of the Western tradition from the ancient to the modern periods. Chapters explore the dynamic interrelation of sexuality and visual art and emphasize problems of historical evidence and interpretation and the need to reconstruct social and cultural realities sometimes quite different from our own. *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* addresses contemporary art historians' interest in studying sexuality in the visual arts, examining such questions as: What are some of the present-day reasons for, and problems of, this research? How is it related to other research areas within art history and to wider public debates about the meaning, value, and propriety of works of art? While the book examines a variety of research problems and theoretical perspectives, most chapters focus on the historical interpretation of a particular work of art, artist, or visual convention. Chapters present new documentation of the importance of homosexuality in the production and reception of artworks in the Western tradition, develop models for approaching the question of how sexuality and visual creation are related, and explore researchers' experiences and obligations in working in the area of gay and lesbian studies in art history today. Contributing authors stress problems of historical evidence and reconstruction; the social and cultural construction of homosexuality; and the active role of visual conventions in shaping perceptions of homosexuals, homosexuality, and homosexual desire. They discuss both the biography of artists and the significance of individual works of art and the social reception and circulation of works of art in the context of wider religious, legal, medical, political, and economic relations. The book may revise readers' beliefs about the significance and value of a number of works of art hitherto forgotten, neglected, under-appreciated, or misinterpreted. *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* is an enlightening and informative book for art historians, museum professionals, scholars in the field of lesbian and gay studies, and art history students and professors.

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