



Mona Lisa: A Life Discovered

Dianne Hales

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Everybody knows her smile, but no one knows her story: Meet the flesh-and-blood woman who became one of the most famous artistic subjects of all time—Mona Lisa.

A genius immortalized her. A French king paid a fortune for her. An emperor coveted her. Every year more than nine million visitors trek to view her portrait in the Louvre. Yet while everyone recognizes her smile, hardly anyone knows her story. “Combining history, whimsical biography, personal travelogue, and love letter to Italy...*Mona Lisa* is an entertaining” (*Publishers Weekly*) book of discovery about the world’s most recognized face. Who was she? Why did the most renowned painter of her time choose her as his model? What became of her? And why does her smile enchant us still?

Dianne Hales, author of *La Bella Lingua*, became obsessed with finding the real Mona Lisa on repeated trips to Florence. In *Mona Lisa: A Life Discovered*, she takes readers with her to meet Lisa’s descendants; uncover her family’s long and colorful history; and explore the neighborhoods where she lived as a girl, a wife, and a mother. In the process, we can participate in Lisa’s daily rituals; understand her personal relationships; and see, hear, smell, and taste “her” Florence. Hales brings to life a time poised between the medieval and the modern, a vibrant city bursting into fullest bloom, and a culture that redefined the possibilities of man—and of woman.

Mona Lisa is “a readable and affectionate my-search-for-story for art lovers and anyone interested in glorious and gory Florence in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, and in the divine Leonardo in particular...Hales’s assiduous research has made it possible for us to know Mona Lisa just a bit, enough to wonder if this otherwise ordinary Florentine housewife could ever have imagined her portrait enchanting millions for centuries” (USATODAY.com).

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