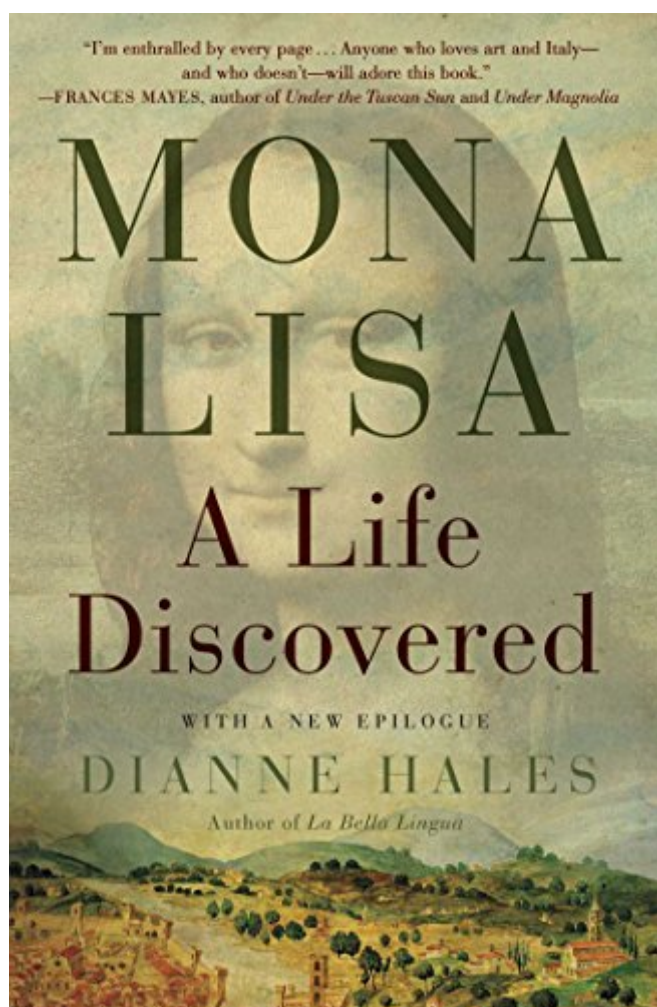


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Mona Lisa: A Life Discovered



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

I recently had the chance to hear and meet author Dianne Hales at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in NYC for the presentation of her latest book, MONA LISA A Life Discovered. I have been a fan of Dianne for a few years and have promoted her previous book, La Bella Lingua to anyone interested in getting to know the Italian language and culture. Having read her recent work and listened to her lively presentation, I can tell you that this second book is a different kind of experience. Picture yourself stepping into a time machine that transports you back to Renaissance Florence. Dianne doesn't merely define who the subject of Leonardo's celebrated portrait was; she recreates the world in which the wife of Francesco del Giocondo lived. Through exhaustive research and countless interviews of experts we learn of her genealogy, her station in society, her home life, her possible brushes with the illuminati of her era, and ultimately, how she chose to live her last years. Lisa Gherardini didn't leave diaries or a paper trail of her life. The author must therefore conjecture the daily routine of a life lived so long ago. But what an age she lived in! Florence was home to a constellation of artist, great thinkers, powerbrokers, princes of the church, extravagantly wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs. And much of the drama they lived played out in the very streets that "La Gioconda" probably traversed. Along the way the reader learns fascinating bits of information about Lisa, her family, her times and the painting of her that would become one of the most celebrated works of art. Find out how John Kennedy may have a blood connection to her. Learn about the typical love life of a Renaissance woman.

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