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CECI EST UNE ICÔNE

DU CHEF D'ŒUVRE À LA CULTURE POPULAIRE

Text by Francesca Bonazzoli and Michele Robecchi

Foreword by Maurizio Cattelan

Why do certain artworks, such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Goya's *The Nude Maja*, Picasso's *Guernica*, or Munch's *The Scream*, become popular icons that everyone recognizes? Who has the power to turn an artwork into an image that is universally known and sometimes worshipped in a sort of pilgrimage, where the faithful form long lines in front of museums? Why, of all the works by Rodin, should *The Thinker* have become the most famous? What is it about Leonardo's *Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa* that makes them two of the best known works in the world, whereas although everyone has heard of Caravaggio, many would be hard pressed to think of the title of just one of his paintings or remember it in any detail? Why has Botticelli's *Venus* suddenly become a star after being totally ignored for centuries? Thorough, informative, and enjoyable, *Icons* traces the history of some thirty masterpieces, showing how each was raised to the status of icon. The book examines for the first time the processes by which an artwork turns into a popular icon. The authors explain how the various examples were conceived, how they become an object of worship, and how the perception of these icons has changed or evolved over the centuries.

Francesca Bonazzoli is an art historian and journalist, writing for *Corriere della Sera* since 1992. She is the author of essays and articles for various exhibition catalogues and has also contributed to television programmes devoted to art.

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