

P Art and Culture, Fall 2003: War in Art

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Paulo Uccello's cycle of three great panel paintings representing the Battle of San Romano, 1 June 1432 is not only the artist's most recognised work, but one of the emblematic monuments through which we visualize the Italian Renaissance. It is, therefore, all the more unfortunate how little we actually know about these pictures, how damaged and altered they have become over time, and how questionable they are as vehicles for understanding Italian Renaissance art or warfare. Not that these impediments have prevented a long history of fascination with these delightful pictures or crowds of visitors from responding to them enthusiastically in London (National Gallery), Florence (Uffizi), and Paris (Louvre) - the three great museums among which they are now divided - or scholars from engaging very actively in attempts to reconstruct and interpret them. In this study, I will attempt to clarify what is and what is not known about Uccello's Battle of San Romano; understand the ways in which this extraordinary projects fits, however comfortably or not, into its context of art and society; and appreciate what Uccello and history have given us by subjecting the three panels to close examination.

by Charles Cohen, having previously served on the faculty at Harvard University, is the chair of the Visual Arts Committee at The University of Chicago.

Other topics of "War in Art" issue is listed below:

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Antique Images and the Words of Homer

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The Magic Army of the First Chinese Emperor
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British Naval Paintings
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Reflections on Goya's Disasters of War
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Inspiration and Progress in the 20th Century's
Most Important Anti-War Painting
Picasso, Guernica, and War
by Shannon Schedlich-Day

Reference:

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