

Best Books of the Year 2019

Arts books

Best books of 2019: Art

Jackie Wullschläger selects her must-read titles

Jackie Wullschläger NOVEMBER 22 2019



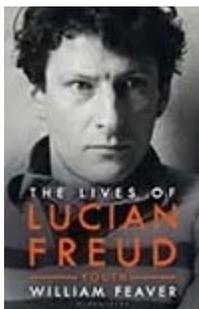
Leonardo da Vinci Rediscovered, by Carmen C Bambach, *Yale University Press*, RRP£400/\$550

The outstanding memorial to Leonardo's quincentenary year: a new biographical approach across four riveting, exquisite volumes, exploring through paintings, drawings, diagrams, handwriting, Leonardo's attempt to visualise knowledge in a fresh way, and his sense of the gap between his mysterious imaginings and his intellectual and artistic achievements.



Judith Kerr, by Joanna Carey, *Thames & Hudson*, RRP£18.95/\$29.95

The great children's illustrator and writer (*The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*) died in May aged 95. Packed with images known and unknown, this account of her life and art, based on interviews, reads like a final work in her own voice — funny, sympathetic, original.

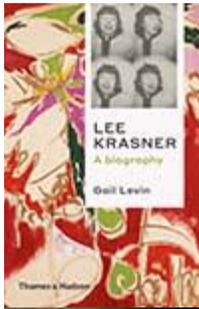


The Lives of Lucian Freud: Youth 1922-1968, by William Feaver, *Bloomsbury*, RRP£35/*Knopf*, RRP\$40

You can't like him but the outlandish, amoral antics of the painter, as reckless in life as he was fastidious in the studio, mesmerise in this lively, fluent account. Freud, who saw people as animals — and preferred horses and hounds — comes across as a feral, instinctive, guiltless, cunning creature: characteristics that brilliantly served his art.

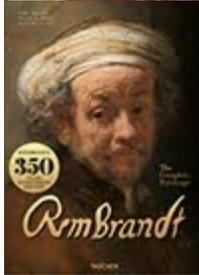
Lee Krasner: A Biography, by Gail Levin, *Thames & Hudson*, RRP£12.99

Of 2019's many exhibitions showcasing marginalised women artists, standout was the Barbican's *Lee Krasner* — known too long primarily as Mrs Jackson Pollock. Like her



paintings, Krasner's life was fraught, dynamic, independent, of absolute integrity: an engrossing, uplifting story of personal and creative survival, against a bright backcloth of mid-century America.

Rembrandt: The Complete Paintings, by Volker Manuth, Marieke de Winkel and Rudie van Leeuwen, *Taschen*, RRP£150/\$200



Taschen's outsize, close-up format works superbly for Rembrandt, who built his compositions on intricate details evoked in fabulously free, loose marks, every stroke its own drama, animating portraits, spiritual narratives, everyday scenes; texture, colour, light all resonate here. A companion volume is Taschen's equally engrossing giant catalogue of Rembrandt drawings.

Jackie Wullschläger is the FT's chief visual arts critic

What are your favourites from this list — and what books have we missed? Tell us in the comments below.

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