

PARADOX

Iconophobia in Italy was more than a matter of a few occasional disruptions perpetrated by marginal heretics. At the most basic level, an ambivalence about images was implicit in the whole history of Christian art-making, shadowing that history even in the periods of the greatest proliferation of images, or perhaps especially in those moments. Or perhaps it presents a different pattern, in which the sharpest critiques, often archaizing and even reform-minded, come through in its most ambitious aesthetic statements: Brunelleschi's orderly and white church interiors, Masaccio's stripped down composition wielded against the copia of the courtly style, Donatello's stylistic self-awareness, Mantegna's philological rigor, Bellini's marriage of naturalism and Byzantine formality, Giorgione's semantic reticence, Bramante's organic spatialism, Michelangelo's disdain for the literal.

Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 2011), p. 198