

Julianne Davidow



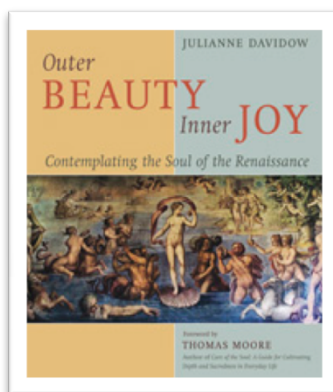
Outer Beauty, Inner Joy:

Contemplating the Soul of the Renaissance

Foreword by **Thomas Moore**, Author of *Care of the Soul*

An enchanted life has many moments when the heart is overwhelmed by beauty and the imagination is electrified by some haunting quality in the world or by a spirit or voice speaking from deep within a thing, a place, or a person.

-Thomas Moore



www.juliannedavidow.com

info@juliannedavidow.com

Tel: 917-686-2121



Praise for *Outer Beauty, Inner Joy*

A beautiful, exhilarating book that integrates the inspiration of Renaissance art with its philosophy.

-Richard Smoley, author of *The Dice Game of Shiva*

Outer Beauty, Inner Joy is in itself a work of art – a brilliant interweaving of quotes and original text, art and architecture, and some of the most beautiful photography of Italy’s treasures that I have ever seen.

-Roy Doliner, co-author of *The Sistine Secrets: Michelangelo’s Hidden Messages in the Heart of the Vatican*.

We need the Renaissance as never before. After a century in which art has celebrated ugliness, we should assert our divine right to live and create with beauty. Beset by religious manias, we would do well to return to the generous syncretism of the Neoplatonists. Julianne Davidow’s book shows this dual path as plainly as can be, with images of beauty that feel the imagination and philosophic sayings that resonate with the intellect. Her commentaries bridge the centuries to make these Renaissance Italians our contemporaries and guides to a saner way of being.

-Joscelyn Godwin, author of *The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance*

It’s time to move on and focus on those things we have neglected: art, beauty, and the union of humanism and religion. I would urge the reader to read the book carefully. Think about the words and take time with the images. There is the possibility of new life here, for finding a way out of the dehumanizing philosophies that control our world.

-Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul: A Guide for cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*.





We know the Italian Renaissance was an explosion of art and beauty, but we've forgotten the philosophy that inspired it. Renaissance scholars believed in a Perennial Wisdom at the core and spiritual heart of all the great religious traditions. Combining their present day worldview with the works of the ancient world, they forged an inclusive philosophy. one that spoke of a new way to experience life and a new understanding of the individual's place in the cosmos. The role of the artist and the making of art held an important place in society. Artists could contact unseen forces, bringing the beauty of higher realms into their earthly creations. Through contemplating this beauty, viewers too could touch its divine essence.

Using the visual beauty of masterpiece paintings, sculptures, and architecture from this period, Julianne Davidow presents, in the words of Thomas Moore's foreword, a point of view that has been utterly lost to the modern mind: the idea that divinity and humanism go together. Soulful, timeless quotes from some of the most influential people of the era are placed with evocative images to create a book that reveals the attitude and quality of mind of a period that remain fundamental to modern spiritual and psychological thought.

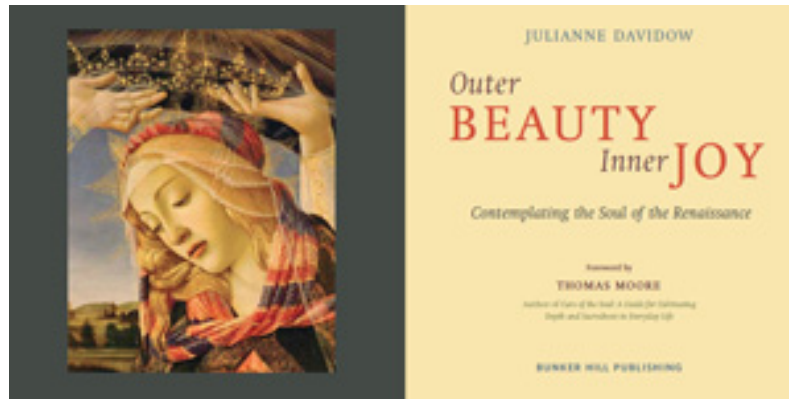
In returning to the Renaissance for inspiration, we can find a sense of renewal for our time.

Outer Beauty, Inner Joy: Contemplating the Soul of the Renaissance.

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Julianne Davidow has an enduring fascination with the Italian Renaissance. She began spending time in Italy in 1990 and has lived in Rome and Venice. She conducted research for *Outer Beauty, Inner Joy* at the Marciana Library in Venice, at the New York City Public Library, at conferences sponsored by the Renaissance Society of America and the New York Open Center, and through independent study. Having studied comparative religion and literature at Sarah Lawrence College, she continues to take a deep interest in these subjects. She writes on art, history, travel, and spirituality, and loves to photograph ancient art and artifact. Her work has been shown in exhibitions in the U.S. and in Europe.

She speaks on Renaissance art and the ecumenical philosophy that inspired it. She also gives workshops on how we can use these wisdom teachings to find beauty in our daily lives, forge a greater connection to the world around us, and open portals to our inner source of guidance and inspiration.



How did the idea for Outer Beauty, Inner Joy originate?

The beauty of Italy has always particularly enchanted me, especially the works of the Renaissance. I'm not alone, of course! Italy has been drawing people from all over the world for a thousand years. It has the most UNESCO world heritage sites of any country in the world, and the art of the Italian Renaissance is a continuing source of fascination for many people.

An interest in photography developed from my travels, because in Italy there are always images I want to capture. When I started reading Renaissance philosophy, I realized that in order to fully appreciate the art, it was important to enter into the mindset of those who created it. The Renaissance was still a time when people felt that the cosmos was a great nest of being. "As above, so below" is a saying from a hermetic document called the Emerald Tablet which Renaissance philosophers read. They believed that whatever a person does on earth affects events on other, higher, planes of existence, and whatever happens on higher planes affects events on earth.

When I started to understand the link between what people were writing during the Italian Renaissance and the photos I was taking and the art I was seeing in books and museums, I wanted to combine them, for they belong together. I came to understand that my appreciation wasn't just a matter of aesthetics, but that the deep spirituality of Renaissance artists was infused into what they made: in art, architecture, and in all kinds of objects.

What was the philosophy about?

Italian Renaissance philosophers studied Plato, Neoplatonism and the Jewish Kabbalah, and incorporated ideas from these traditions into their own works. Scholars wanted to find the common thread in all of the philosophies they studied. They believed in a perennial wisdom, one that transcends religious boundaries. This wisdom says that each person's life plays an important part in the workings of one divine universe, and that the individual can come to know the divine living essence within. Artists held an important place in society. It was believed that they could contact higher or deeper sources of inspiration, bringing a divine essence into their works. Through contemplating this art, viewers too, could touch its essence and be transformed by it.

What does Outer Beauty, Inner Joy mean?

Renaissance Neoplatonists believed that the beauty we see here on earth is a reflection of an absolute, divine beauty. Experiencing beauty and love were said to be pathways to finding a greater unity with the beauty of all creation. Beauty is an important element in our lives. From our first moments we all seem to be searching for love and beauty. Beauty is healing. Images penetrate our minds and heart, and resonate with something deep inside each one of us ; that “something” is often called the soul. If we can appreciate beauty, then there has to be something in each of us that is beautiful as well, an essence that is within all things. Simply by seeing a beautiful image, our sense of self can be uplifted, expanded, transcended.

Why is this book important now?

Renaissance artists and philosophers had a genuine sense of respect, awe, and wonder at human life and the cosmos. They wanted to convey the message that love and beauty can be spiritual pathways, that the earth is divine.

Beauty is something that transcends and unites all spiritual traditions. The more we can search for and find beauty, the stronger we can become in the face of adversity. Children who grow up in a harmonious environment can grow to be strong, sane adults, and contribute to the solutions we need to find to survive in the world. It has been shown in tests that those suffering from various diseases have been helped through images of beauty and by participating in creative activities. We are more productive, helpful and happier people when we can find beauty in our everyday lives. That which we find beautiful is that which we love. That which we love we want to care for and protect.

