Welcome to the Hirsch Library. We trust that you have selected the object you wish to write about, and will spend a good deal of time looking at the object first-hand. The cultural backgrounds and descriptions in books and journals will be far more helpful if you absorb such material already having begun looking at the panel upstairs in the Beck Building.

Below are some suggestions for reading on the Early Renaissance, about the medium and technique of panel painting, and about the “subject” of the picture. By describing the subject matter of picture, and the technique the artist used, you should be able to come up with your assessment of the content—that is, the meaning, or the “soul” of the work. What follows below is hardly a comprehensive list—the literature on the Italian Renaissance is vast. We will welcome your own suggestions of titles to add to the library, and how to improve this list, so please let us know what you find most helpful!

“Reference” books you will find on the main floor; “Ready reference” behind the information desk. For items from the main stacks, please jot down the titles and call numbers, and the library staff will retrieve them for you. If you need help with terms & techniques, symbols, or abbreviations, please ask.

Passages specifically on the Straus Madonna


Surveys of the Italian Renaissance


John Paoletti. Art in Renaissance Italy. N 6915 .P26 2002


Robert Oetel. Early Italian Painting to 1400. ND 613 .O3213 1968

Alastair Smart. The Dawn of Italian Painting, 1250-1400. ND 613 .S6 1978


Technique, Iconography, Theory, Society, and the Function of Altarpieces, especially in Florence

Gertrud Schiller. *Iconography of Christian Art.* (section on Mary typology) N 7830.S35132
Michael Baxandall. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy.* ND 615 .B2
F.W. Kent. *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy.* N 5273 .P38 1987
Martin Wackernagel. *World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist.* N 6921 .F7 W313
Jaroslav Pelikan. *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture.* BT 610 .P45 1996

Web sites are usually a misfortunate diversion in this area, but you might check [witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHmedieval.html#LateGothic](http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHmedieval.html#LateGothic) (Recommended by The Fogg Art Museum on its own “Investigating the Renaissance” page)

The MFAH Archives holds the correspondence and documentation relating to the Straus family, their donations, and to the painting. For an appointment, call (713) 639-7733.

To track down articles in journals, use the Wilson Art Index, the Bibliography of the History of Art, and leads you gain from citations in your reading (for example, in Wilson 1996 or Paoletti 2002). You could browse exhibition catalogs, or books about the holdings of other museums: the entries written about similar objects could help you to look and think, and provide examples of how to write about art. To find books, use keywords in the on-line catalog. Once you zero-in on titles you like, pay attention to how those items are cataloged, and use their subject headings to find similar books. Use the bibliographies of books and articles you read to find leads to other sources.

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at *Sylvan Barnet’s A Short Guide to Writing about Art,* which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk.

At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. We can be reached at 713-639-7325.