President’s Message from Sean Roberts

September 15, 2017

Dear Members of the Italian Art Society:

With the start of the Fall semester once again upon many of us, I welcome another opportunity to thank each of you for your support of the IAS, catch you up on some of the recent successful programming we have sponsored, and to ask you to mark your calendars for a host of events planned for the coming academic year.

Since the publication of our Spring Newsletter, the IAS has been active at a host of conferences and events in both North America and across the Atlantic. Two IAS sponsored sessions were featured at the 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo this May on the topics of “Digital Reconstructions: Italian Buildings and their Decorations,” organized by Kaelin Jewell (Temple University) and Amy Gillette (St. Joseph’s University) and “Obscured by the Alps: Medieval Italian Architecture and the European Canon,” organized by Erik Gustafson (George Mason University). Likewise, we sponsored a session at the 70th annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), in Glasgow, Scotland this June. Co-organized by Marius Hauknes (University of Chicago) and Alison Locke Perchuk (California State University Channel Islands), the panel explored the theme of “Re-Thinking Medieval Rome: Architecture and Urbanism.”

Giving the opportunity for our members to present at major conferences is among the most significant benefits provided by the IAS and our ability to support such innovative research is only possible thanks to the hard work of our Program Committee. I want to thank Vice President for Program Coordination Karen Lloyd for the energy she has devoted to this position during a crucial moment of transition for the organization. While Karen’s decision to step down from her role this fall will be felt by all of us who have worked closely with her, I am happy to report that the position of Acting VP for Program Coordination will be transferred into the most capable hands of Sarah Wilkins, a long-time member of the IAS and already a vital member of this committee.

This summer also saw the highly successful eighth annual IAS/Kress lecture, “Il ‘fenomeno bolognese’ rivisto: donne artiste a Bologna tra quattrocento e settecento” delivered by Professor Babette Bohn (Texas Christian University) in Bologna’s historic former monastery of Santa Cristina, now home of the University’s Aula Magna. This stimulating lecture charted some two hundred years of women’s participation in the city’s visual and literary arts, probing both the evidence for such apparent exceptionality and exploring the social historical and historiographic conditions that might have made it possible. Along with myself, almost forty scholars not only from Bologna and its environs but also from North American universities were in attendance, exemplifying the spirit of exchange that animates these ongoing collaborations with the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Thanks are due not only to Babette but also to the Dipartimento delle Arti visive both for hosting the event and for helping to organize a wonderful post-lecture reception and especially to Professor Francesco Benelli. I am grateful as well to Kelli Wood, who both represented the Emerging Scholars Committee at the event and provided a great deal of logistical support. Our competition for the ninth IAS/Kress lecture, to be held in Rome during the Spring/Summer of 2018, will be announced shortly, as soon as details of a host institution are finalized.

As usual, the IAS will sponsor several sessions at the rapidly approaching Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, to be held in Milwaukee from October 26 to 29. This year, we have two linked sessions on “Revisiting Raphael’s Vatican Stanze,” organized by Tracy Cosgriff and chaired by Kim Butler Wingfield and former IAS president Sheryl Reiss. While we are not hosting a large reception, we do hope to have an informal happy hour for members (to be announced soon) and I look forward to getting the chance to see many of you at the conference. Should any of you find yourselves a bit closer to this side of the world this fall, I will also be representing the IAS at the 11th Conference of the Taiwan Association of Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies. I’ll be delivering a keynote address “Mapping
Arcadia,” at the Tainan National University of the Art on October 21. So you can count on a bit of jetlag if you run into me in Milwaukee.

Though the busy spring conference season is still some ways off, I ask you to save the date for several upcoming events as you plan our calendar. The College Art Association’s annual conference will be held this February 21-24 in Los Angeles. Along with our sponsored panel “Processi italiani: Examining Process in Postwar Italian Art, 1945-1980,” organized by Tenley Bick, the meeting will once again serve as the venue for our annual executive committee and members’ business meetings. This year, the members meeting will take place on Friday, February 23 from 12:30 to 1:30pm in room 409B of the LA Convention Center.

I am also pleased to announce that we will be sponsoring a panel at this spring’s Society of Architectural Historians conference to be held in Saint Paul, Minnesota April 18-22. Organized by Lauren Jacobi (MIT), the session will explore “Thalassic Architecture: Medieval & Renaissance Italy and the Sea.”

In addition to several sponsored sessions, the Renaissance Society of America annual meeting, from March 22 to 24, will include a major reception for IAS members. Executive Vice President Mark Rosen and I are in the process of planning this event to welcome all of you to New Orleans and we will be in touch soon with further details. Our receptions are among the most important events we sponsor, providing a chance for so many of our members to talk with another face-to-face and make connections with colleagues across the full range of disciplines that take Italian art as their focus. Such events also represent an increasingly large proportion of our organization’s modest budget. Last year’s anniversary celebrations saw the IAS hosting gala receptions at both CAA and RSA, as well as more intimate social events at conferences including SCSC and ICMS. Moving forward, Mark, I, and the rest of the Board feel that our resources can be sustainably and responsibly maximized by staggering such receptions between the major conferences at which we have a significant presence.

Along with these upcoming conferences, I also want to remind you that deadlines are approaching for several of our competitive awards and grants. These include our Travel Grant for Modern Topics (due October 8) and our Travel Grants for Emerging Scholars (due November 1), providing funding for members presenting papers for spring 2018 conferences at which the IAS is sponsoring sessions. I encourage all of you to visit the Grants and Opportunities section of the website for full information on all of the funding opportunities provided by the IAS. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Christian Kleinbub for stepping into the role of Acting Awards Committee Chair, one of the most vital and demanding of our offices and one that has a profound impact on directly meeting the needs of our members.

Hoping to see many of you soon in Milwaukee, Los Angeles, New Orleans or elsewhere.

a presto,
Sean

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ITALIAN ART SOCIETY NEWS

CONFERENCE TRAVEL GRANT FOR MODERN TOPICS

The Italian Art Society announces a grant of a minimum of $500 to support international conference travel by scholars working on Italian art from the early nineteenth century to the present.

Eligible scholars must be:
- U.S. or foreign scholars holding the Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree
- Undertaking transoceanic travel
- Planning to present a paper in an IAS-sponsored session at:
- Any conference where the IAS is sponsoring a session on Italian art and architecture of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, such as: College Art Association (CAA), American Association for Italian Studies (AAIS), Society of Architectural Historians (SAH).

Next application deadline: October 8, 2017. Deadlines will be twice a year, usually in October and February.

Please send the following as a single WORD or PDF document (with last name in title) via e-mail to the Chair of the IAS Awards Committee, Christian Kleinbub, at awards@italianartsociety.org:
- an introductory cover letter indicating your IAS membership status
- a current two-page CV
- your paper abstract with session title and chair information
- a preliminary budget with airfare, ground transportation, and lodging information only
- a description of other possible travel funding sources

The IAS Awards Committee will determine the awarding of the grant, with final approval by the IAS Board of Directors. Funding must be used within one year of award date and a final report indicating actual expenses must be submitted to the IAS Treasurer and IAS President within one month of the funded conference travel.

Current IAS officials and committee members are not eligible to apply. Recipients must be members of the IAS at the time...
of application and upon receipt of the award, and may not have received an IAS award in the previous two years.

**TRAVEL GRANTS FOR EMERGING SCHOLARS**

The Italian Art Society is pleased to announce the 2018 competition for TWO GRANTS of $500 each that support travel for emerging scholars to one of the following:

1. The College Art Association meeting Los Angeles, February 21-24, 2018
2. The Renaissance Society of America meeting in New Orleans, LA, March 22-24, 2018
3. The International Congress for Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, MI, May 10-13, 2018
4. Any conference in 2018 where IAS is sponsoring a session

This competition is open to Master’s or Ph.D. students, or Ph.D. holders within ten years of the degree (pre-tenure, non-tenure-track, or independent scholars). Applicants must be presenting a paper about the art or architecture of Italy from the prehistoric to the present at one of these 2018 conferences, but not necessarily in an IAS session. Recipients must be members of the IAS at the time of application and upon receipt of the award, and may not have received an IAS award in the previous two years. IAS officers and committee members are not eligible to apply.

**Application deadline: November 1, 2017**

Please send the following as a single WORD or PDF document (with last name in title) via e-mail to the Chair of the IAS Awards Committee, Christian Kleinbub, at awards@italianartsociety.org:

- an introductory cover letter indicating your IAS membership status
- a current two-page C.V.
- your paper abstract with session title and chair information
- a preliminary budget
- a description of other possible travel funding sources (and their likelihood of success)

Award notification will be made by December 1st.

The IAS Awards Committee will determine the awarding of the grant, with final approval by the Board of Directors. Upon acceptance of the grant, the awardee must submit a 250-word abstract of the project to be posted on the IAS website. Funding must be used within the 2018 calendar year and a final report indicating actual expenses must be submitted to the IAS Treasurer and IAS President by December 31, 2018. IAS will not reimburse for research expenses incurred before or after the grant period indicated by the award.

**RESEARCH & PUBLICATION GRANT**

Scholars of any nationality holding the Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree are eligible. This grant is for funding of up to $1000, available for use in 2018 to fund or subsidize a research trip or a publication (e.g., for purchasing image rights or as a publication subvention) on any aspect of Italian art and architecture from prehistory to the present.

Applicants must be IAS members at the time of application and use of the funds and may not have received an IAS award in the previous two years. IAS officers and committee members are not eligible to apply. Priority will be given to meritorious projects.

**Application deadline: January 10, 2018**

Please send the following as a single WORD or PDF document (with last name in title) via e-mail to the Chair of the IAS Awards Committee, Christian Kleinbub, at awards@italianartsociety.org:

- an introductory cover letter indicating your IAS membership status
- a one-page description of the project
- a current two-page C.V.
- a proposed budget
- a description of other potential funding sources

The IAS Awards Committee will determine the awarding of the grant, with final approval by the Board of Directors. Upon acceptance of the grant, the awardee must submit a 250-word abstract of the project to be posted on the IAS website. Funding must be used within the 2018 calendar year and a final report indicating actual expenses must be submitted to the IAS Treasurer and IAS President by December 31, 2018. IAS will not reimburse for research expenses incurred before or after the grant period indicated by the award.

**DISSERTATION RESEARCH GRANT**

This grant is for up to $1000.00 to fund or subsidize research travel or other expenses, available for use during 2018. Dissertation research projects may relate to the study of any aspect of the architecture or visual arts of Italy, from the prehistoric period to the present day. Only dissertation research will be funded and applicants must have advanced to candidacy.

Doctoral students of any nationality who have not received an IAS award in the past two years are welcome to apply. Applicants must be IAS members at the time of application and use of the funds. Priority will be given to meritorious projects. IAS officers and committee members are not eligible to apply.

**Application deadline: January 10, 2018**

Please send the following as a single WORD or PDF document (with last name in title) via e-mail to the Chair of the IAS Awards Committee, Christian Kleinbub, at awards@italianartsociety.org:
The IAS Awards Committee will determine the awarding of the grant, with final approval by the Board of Directors. The announcement of the award, including the awardee’s name and project title, will be made on the IAS website and at the annual IAS business meeting at CAA. Upon acceptance of the grant, the awardee must submit a 250-word abstract of the project to be posted on the IAS website. Funding must be used within the 2018 calendar year and a final report indicating actual expenses must be submitted to the IAS Treasurer and IAS President by December 31, 2018.

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

**EXHIBITION REVIEW**

Lucio Fontana: Crosses, on view at Galerie Karsten Greve's Cologne site, September 8–October 28, 2017

By Adrian Duran, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Lucio Fontana is a more complex and diverse artist than many yet recognize. Widely celebrated for his *bucchi* and *tagli* works of the middle decades of the twentieth century—the punctured and sliced canvases most notably—the margins of his career prior to and during these postwar decades are essential for a full understanding of his agenda and evolution as one of Italy’s most important artists of the last century. One of the most frequent, albeit often overlooked, threads in his career is the use of the ceramic medium in the service of wildly abstracted forms and narratives, ranging from vibrantly glazed animals to reliefs and monumental vessels. Among these, some of the most striking are his scenes of the Crucifixion, of which eighteen were exhibited this summer in an absolute gem of an exhibition at Paris’s Galerie Karsten Greve.*

Fontana’s imaginations of the Crucifixion are unorthodox, often wondrously so. Heavily worked clay splays in all directions. Glossy, reflective, often metallic glazes cover the surfaces, at times only partially, leaving fired clay visible. Matte paint and gilding appear intermittently. At times, the surfaces of these works reminisce of mother of pearl, shells, or coral, perhaps not unexpectedly as his interest in the medium was first sparked at the Mazzotti factory in the Ligurian seaside town of Albissola. At others, his surface treatments evoke the *drappo cangiante*, the garment of the personification of Painting herself, so widely emulated in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The sense of color, often muzzled by monochromatic canvases, is wild, eruptive, often grotesque, but simultaneously engrossing and luxurious, emphasizing the tensions between surface and substance. Structurally, they are both additive and reductive, with theatrical gestures and billows of material, closest to Bernini’s clay maquettes, Michelangelo’s half-enunciated figures emerging from stone, and Medardo Rosso’s material plasticity. The dynamism of Tintoretto and Rubens comes to mind, as does Cézanne in certain passages of paint application. Futurism lurks just beneath the surface, with Christ flailing off of the cross in ways one imagines Marinetti must have flown through that automobile windshield.

Crucifixions, including a Deposition or two, are not the most common subject in the era of *informale*, but neither are they at all out of place. Fontana’s contemporaries Renato Guttuso, Giacomo Manzù, and Emilio Vedova all made their versions, each of which stood as an outcry against Fascist atrocities and violence. Indeed, even the Fascists had theirs, most famously in the Sacristy of Adalberto Libera’s 1932 palazzo for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*. And we shouldn’t forget that, amidst the making of these works, a Picasso retrospective toured Rome and Milan in 1953-54, bringing Guernica, The Charmel House, and Massacre in Korea to Italian eyes. Tortured, martyred bodies were certainly a leitmotif of the times. Fontana’s sit curiously in this mid-Modernist lineage, as naturally situated amidst the liturgical objects of the High Baroque. Similarly, their visual presence exceeds the domestic scale of these objects. Clearly intended for close looking or devotional attention, their theatricality is explosively overwhelming, frustrating proximity. As aggregates of these diverse eras and impulses—oscillating between material self-indulgence and representational fantasy—they are certainly rich with echoes.

It is impossible to discuss these works without invoking notions of kitsch. Anthony White has done much to unpack Fontana’s kitschier tendencies as a response to the conservatism of Fascist aesthetics, within which Fontana first asserted himself as a sculptor. As resonant as this subversive impulse is, the Crosses remind us that kitsch is complicated. At times the inevitable result of his glazes and gilding, at others inherited from the hyperbolic visual rhetoric of Catholic ritual objects, here Fontana’s kitsch is a bit more slippery. Certainly, these works can be garish, but one wonders if we’re actually in the netherspace between kitsch and the industrial age. Futurism’s glorification of the machine and technology seems to be the sediment in a strange brew of Modernism’s anti-naturalistic colorism, the inevitabilities of vitrified glazes, and Fontana’s internal attractions to reflective and shiny surfaces and objects, not far flung from the glass bits stuck to his canvases or the cotton candy palette and toothpaste materiality of the *Fine di Dio* paintings. At times, even, he’s kitschy like a fox, placing his...
vent holes where the stab wound in Christ’s side ought to be. Whether this is an opportunistic naturalism or a tongue-in-cheek use of a structural necessity is hard to tell. In either case, it adds depth to the work and offers links to the bigger picture of which Fontana is so often both proponent and respondent.

Where this exhibition succeeds most assertively is its thorough display of one of the lesser-known and rarely-studied segments of the career of an artist presumed by most essential to the narratives of postwar Italian, and, by extension European and global, art. Fontana’s work, certainly, is not unknown. Recent retrospectives, including the 2002 Lucio Fontana: metafore barocche at Verona’s Palazzo Forti and 2014’s Lucio Fontana: Retrospective at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, built on earlier exhibitions, including the Guggenheim’s 1977 Lucio Fontana, 1899-1968: A Retrospective, offered wonderfully comprehensive views of his career. And texts like Yve-Alain Bois’s “Fontana’s Base Materialism” and Anthony White’s indispensable Lucio Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch have done much to deepen our understanding. However, many of the subtle intricacies and microevolutions of this remarkably complex career remain underexplored. The Galerie Karsten Greve exhibition is a beautiful example of how this can be accomplished suavely and concisely, with a well-chosen set of objects, the quantity of which allows for close and specific looking with enough diversity to mine the nuances without being lost amidst infinite repetition or variation.

More broadly, the beauty of such a show is that it reminds us that our narratives of postwar art are still incomplete. Greenbergian High Modernism, all of its flaws notwithstanding, still looms large over the discourse, both American and international. Collections and exhibitions still privilege the large, non-objective abstraction of the 1940s and 50s over Neorealist and other representational trends. Painting and sculpture dominate other media. Simply put, we neither expect nor emphasize works such as these, much to our detriment. Postwar Italian art remains full of surprises and the Art Historical discourse is integrating these at a remarkable pace. Exhibitions such as Lucio Fontana: Crosses are a catalyst to further exploration, more looking, and deeper historical contextualization and a resonant reminder that there is much left to see and do.

* I had the pleasure of viewing this exhibition with Prof. Lara Pucci, University of Nottingham, UK and many of the ideas herein are the result of our conversations.

**The Great Pompeii Project**

By Summer Trentin, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Contrary to popular belief, Pompeii is not a city frozen in time but a space transformed by disaster, exploration, rediscovery, conservation, and tourism. Since excavations began in the eighteenth century, the experience of Pompeii has been constructed in part by contemporary thought about the ancient world and filtered through the popular imagination. In this sense it is a mutable space, a living city that both shapes and is shaped by its own history. In recent years part of the city’s narrative has been marred by closures, collapses, and bad press. Fortunately, however, the latest chapter in Pompeii’s story is a more positive one thanks to the Great Pompeii Project, initiated in 2012 with EU funding, and the leadership of new director Massimo Osanna.

Pompeii is one of Italy’s most famous sites, but a visitor seeing it for the first time five years ago could be forgiven for feeling somewhat underwhelmed. At the beginning of this decade, very few of Pompeii’s houses, baths, and shops were publicly accessible; even many streets were completely closed to tourists. Opening times for the few publicly accessible buildings were often erratic and unpredictable. Since the initiation of the Great Pompeii Project, over two dozen structures have reopened. The December 2016 opening of the House of the Vettii, following more than a decade of restoration, was perhaps the most anticipated. Excavated in the late nineteenth century, the house is famous for its rich decoration that includes fourth-style fresco painting and a large peristyle garden adorned with sculpture and fountains. Upon entering the house, the visitor is greeted by a painting of Priapus weighing his oversized phallus against a bag of gold. The cuttings for a door that covered this painting after its excavation until at least the 1960s are reminders of a time when Roman erotica was hidden away from public view. Today the reaction to the painting is giggles and selfies rather than pearl clutching.

Beyond Priapus, in the house’s atrium, one of the two bronze strongboxes discovered in the room has been restored and returned to its original position. A fountain statuette of Priapus, found in a service area of the house, has been placed in one of the decorated rooms adjacent to the atrium. Since most of the treasures of Pompeii are no longer in situ, it is a treat to see objects in their original context. The restored paintings, too, are beautifully vivid, particularly in the so-called Ixion Room, one of the most famous examples of fourth-style Pompeian wall painting. Unfortunately, the House of the Vettii’s peristyle garden and several adjacent rooms remain closed, tastefully hidden from view behind panels adorned with a black-and-white photograph of the peristyle.
Another notable opening is the House of the Cryptoricticus. The house is both unusual and spectacular—the eponymous cryptoricticus is a vaulted walkway adorned with fresco painting. Its ceiling preserves rare examples of Roman stucco decoration, the texture of which is enhanced by light from windows in the vaulted ceiling. Although the decoration is fragmentary, the structure allows an appreciation of Roman architecture and engineering: not only is the volumetric space formed by simple barrel vaults beautiful in its simplicity but the partially subterranean corridors remain cool in the heat of a Campanian July.

The Schola Armatorum, which collapsed in late 2010, has been partly reconstructed. Inside the building, the canvas protecting the frescoes is printed with photographs and text describing the history of the building from its excavation 100 years ago to the present day. The collapse has become part of the history of the building, the most recent misfortune to befall it after its earlier damage from the eruption of Vesuvius and the Allied bombing in World War II.

One could easily spend an entire day exploring the city’s streets and structures, and improved amenities and walkways make it a more pleasant experience to do so. New ramps and walkways on the main streets connect sidewalks to the city’s famous raised crosswalks, creating an accessible pathway that forms the new “Pompeii per Tutti” itinerary. Signage has been improved and now includes opening times for some of the more famous buildings. Old wooden guard booths, now with new paint jobs and frosted windows, have been transformed into “Baby Points” for nursing and changing. The most recent tourist map of the site is more modern, colorful, and readable than the previous version. Even the ancient fountains at which tourists can refill water bottles are marked on the new map.

Efforts have also been made to use the space inside the city’s buildings as display areas. The various exhibits scattered throughout the city and its landmarks speak to the enduring legacy of Pompeii as seen through art, antiquity, and pop culture. This summer the newly remodeled Antiquarium, opened last year, celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Pablo Picasso’s visit to Pompeii. Another exhibit in the Antiquarium addresses the issue of theft. Here, antiquities stolen from Pompeii and the nearby region and subsequently recovered are on display along with fakes produced for the illegal antiquities market.

In the large Palaestra, the temporary exhibit “Pompei et Greci” (through November 2017) is dedicated to the relationship between Pompeii and the ancient Greek world. The nearby amphitheater features a photographic exhibition devoted to Pink Floyd’s live performance there in 1971. An exhibition of monumental bronze works by sculptor Igor Mitoraj, whose works were inspired by classical antiquity, seamlessly inserts contemporary art into the ancient city. Like recovered objects from an archaeological excavation, Mitoraj’s sculptures are fragmentary but hold a commanding presence. The sculpture of Daedalus, chosen to remain permanently at the site, looks out almost mournfully from the platform of the Temple of Venus, his back to visitors leaving the ancient city.

While Pompeii's revitalization will surely make it more compelling to tourists, one of the contradictions of Pompeii is that the very tourists who flock there—about two and a half million a year—pose conservation problems for the site. To alleviate this problem, efforts are underway to direct some of Pompeii’s traffic to other sites. A brand-new stop on the Circumvesuviana rail line, opened in late June, allows much easier tourist access to the underrated Antiquarium of Boscoreale and the Villa Regina, a Roman villa rustica excavated in the 1970s. This stop, along with the Campania Express train, inaugurated in 2015 to transport tourists more quickly and efficiently from Naples to Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Sorrento, should make it easier for tourists to travel to Pompeii’s lesser-known neighbors. Other efforts, such as a ban on the stickers worn by members of the cruise ship groups that flock to the city, should help protect the site from litter and deterioration.

Of course a site as large as Pompeii needs more than a few years for a total rehabilitation, but the Herculean task of reviving Pompeii’s structures and public image seems, thus far, to be a success. Signs of restoration, conservation, and improvement are visible everywhere, and there is more to come. Night visits became possible starting in July and more changes, including a new restaurant inside the site, are on the horizon. While there is still work to be done, this is an exciting chapter in Pompeii’s history.

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Giovanni da Rimini. A 14th-Century Masterpiece Unveiled
National Gallery, London

By Livia Lupi, The Warburg Institute, London

This one-room, free exhibition marks the National Gallery’s acquisition in 2015 of a panel by the fourteenth-century artist Giovanni da Rimini. The work, probably realized between 1300 and 1305, is one of the earliest in the Gallery’s collection, and is a major addition to its Trecento pictures. Purchased thanks to the support of American businessman, philanthropist, and collector Ronald S. Lauder, the panel was formerly located at Alnwick Castle.
in Northumberland, and was relatively inaccessible to the public. This exhibition is therefore an opportunity not only to show the work to a wider audience, but also to see it in conjunction with two panels closely linked to it for the first time since 1995, as well as with other works from the Riminese context.

The small panel depicts four different scenes on a gold background: the Assumption of St. John the Evangelist, the Coronation of the Virgin, St. Catherine Preaching to the Philosophers and St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata in a landscape where St. John the Baptist is also represented. The panel is particularly striking for the uneven distribution of the narrative, as the Coronation of the Virgin and the Assumption of St. John, flanking each other, occupy more than half of its surface. Below these, St. Catherine Preaching is organized horizontally and is larger than the scene depicting St Francis’ stigmata, which is arranged vertically. A closer look reveals the outstanding craftsmanship of the work: the complex architectural structures, the detail of various kinds of textiles, including the chrysography of the robes, and the variety of the figures’ gestures, poses and expressions demonstrate the skill of the artist. His accomplishment is made even greater by the dimensions of the panel (54.4 x 36.5 cm), as many of the details such as eyes and decorative patterns are extremely minute.

The exhibition also features two further panels attributed to Giovanni da Rimini. The first represents scenes from the life of Christ and is part of the collection of the Gallerie Nazionali d’Arte Antica at Palazzo Barberini in Rome. This panel’s dimensions are almost identical to those of the National Gallery one, and on the back of both panels there is a very similar inscription seemingly recording the same information. This has led scholars to believe the panels formed a diptych. However, as the catalogue accompanying the exhibition clarifies, there is no material evidence indicating that the panels were hinged together, although they may have been displayed together as pendant panels. The third Giovanni da Rimini panel featuring in the exhibition depicts the Virgin and Child with angels and five saints, and is in the collection of the Pinacoteca Comunale in Faenza. While the figures in this work are very similar to those in the London and Rome panels, the details of the textiles and the frame are notably simpler. Seeing these works together brings to the fore questions as to their meaning and function, the choice of iconography and issues of patronage, as well as highlighting the ability of the artist. Being able to draw direct comparisons also encourages us to closely examine their style of execution in light of their attribution to a poorly documented artist like Giovanni da Rimini.

The three panels are contextualized by comparative works from the National Gallery and from other collections. The Riminese context is represented by an illumination by Neri da Rimini, paintings attributed to Francesco da Rimini, a panel by Giotto and one by Giovanni Baronzio. Particularly striking is a panel attributed to Francesco or to the so-called Master of the Blessed Clare, representing a kneeling Clare receiving a book from St. John the Evangelist who gestures to a large figure of Christ displaying his bleeding wounds as he stands next to the apostles. A panel by Giotto representing the Pentecost reminds us of the painter’s presence in the city and of his considerable influence over Riminese art, whilst Neri’s illumination of St Augustine reiterates the same attention to detail and accomplishment visible in Giovanni’s London and Rome panels. Finally, two ivories from the V&A and British Museum are helpful in tracing Giovanni da Rimini’s Byzantine sources, which the labels and wall texts acknowledge but do not explain or engage with.

Although the exhibition would have benefitted from the inclusion of more works of Byzantine provenance to better highlight the eastern influence on this port town on the Adriatic Sea, the chosen exhibits work well together to portray the artistic context in Rimini without overshadowing the London panel at the heart of the whole enterprise. In particular, the exhibition’s small size is extremely conducive to close observation and in-depth analysis, as it lacks the dispersive quality that characterizes some larger, more inclusive shows. The brief wall texts are clear and ground the exhibition in its aims and the works in their context, but could stress the lack of documentation that makes research on Riminese Trecento art particularly difficult. The labels to individual works could be more explicative, saying a few more words about iconography and patronage. However, some of the shortcomings of the labels are compensated by the catalogue, written by the exhibition curator Anna Koopsra. This brief publication contains good-quality reproductions of exhibits and offers a pithy account of the London panel’s history, reconsidering its original function.

Overall, this exhibition is a great opportunity to view together three highly accomplished panels that hold significance for the history of Riminese art as well as of other parts of central and northern Italy. The show is on view until October 8.
Encountering Botticelli’s Turin Venus on Three Continents: Context and Reminiscence

By Derek A. R. Moore, Skidmore Owings & Merrill

“Sandro Botticelli’s Venus – Italian Renaissance Masterpiece Painting,” University of Hong Kong Museum and Gallery, Hong Kong, 2013.


Connoisseurs, Botticellisti and other specialists – you may now scroll on to the next review. This piece does not contribute to your debates. Rather, I am reflecting on the experience of seeing the Turin Venus on three continents and in three very different settings, noting effects of urban context, architectural layout, curatorial presentation, and social participation – along with reminiscences of a notable teacher.

Several years ago I had a first encounter with the picture. I was in Hong Kong during the run of an exhibition at the University of Hong Kong Museum and Art Gallery, “Sandro Botticelli’s Venus – Italian Renaissance Masterpiece Painting.” It was, in fact, the presentation of a single object: the Venus attributed to Botticelli and/or workshop, on loan from Turin’s Galleria Sabauda, one of two known pictures (the other is in Berlin) where the figure of Venus from Botticelli’s Birth of Venus in the Uffizi is excerpted and placed on a simple parapet. In the following years I made a point of seeing the Botticelli exhibitions in London and Boston that included the Turin Venus.

In Hong Kong the presentation was minimalistic in the extreme and initially underwhelming - just the picture itself, hung opposite the entrance to the Victorian gallery’s octagonal central hall. Clearly produced on a shoe-string, there was little background information on the object itself, no hint of provenance or questions of attribution, and scant representation of related works. The didactic material consisted of elementary explanations of the Renaissance, Florence, the Medici, and Botticelli’s technique - simply printed and mounted on foam core panels around the octagon as if to make up spatially for the absence of other works.

In Hong Kong you take what they offer in the way of visual and performing arts. The former British colony more than lives up to its reputation as “all commerce, all the time.” The recent 60th anniversary exhibition of the Asia Society Hong Kong Center proclaimed: “Asian Philanthropy – What It Means for Business.” Art and commerce easily commingle in such formal venues. But not for Botticelli.

Unexpected memories were triggered viewing the Venus in this context. I recalled a cryptic opening to a long-ago book review, “At Oxford they called me Botticelli.” The author of that admission, whether freighted or frivolous, was the late Sir John Pope-Hennessy. “The Pope’s” great grandfather – also Sir John – had been the British Governor of Hong Kong in the mid-19th century. That extraordinary personage initiated reforms in favor of native Chinese and is considered a seminal figure in the history of the city-state. The Sir John whom many of us knew had not only a familial tie to China, but a sensibility attuned to the refinements of Asian art. He might have relished this single-picture exhibition, with the sinuous golden silhouette of the goddess on a lacquer-black ground floating above Victoria Harbor, the port once commanded by his ancestor, rather than the frothy sea of her mythic birth.

On the Saturday morning I entered the gallery there was not another soul present, just the magnificent picture. The creaking floor boards and mustiness of the antiquated building reminded me of nothing more than visiting provincial museums in Italy some decades ago, when one could be nearly alone for hours with an entire region’s artistic production, free of explanatory labels, without distractions or crowds. Inadvertently, this “exhibition” had yielded that rare experience of quiet focus on an extraordinary work of art, before the noise and hype of contemporary museum culture.

After resting among the Banyan trees of the Far East, the Turin Venus voyaged to London – POSH no doubt (port out, starboard home) – now for an ensemble appearance in “Botticelli Reimagined,” staged at the V&A in 2016. Warning signs abounded. At the V&A’s entry hall you could pose on a meter-tall model bivalve to take your own “Bottishellfie.” Clearly this was not your daddy’s Botticelli.

The exhibition was staged in one of the darker corners of the museum, as if setting you up for something conventional. Once through the dimly lit foyer, however, the organizers staged their cheekiest coup de foudre – a repeating film clip of the young Uma Thurman as Venus in “The Adventures of Baron Munchausen” (1988). The rest of the long rectangular hall was a head-spinning achronological romp, laid out like a pinball course with wing walls flapping the visitor from one spot-lit work to the next. There were images high and low (Burne-Jones and pulp fiction book covers), serious and kitsch (Dyekstra and Koons), and the outright commercial (Dolce and Gabbana).

All this before you saw an actual picture by Botticelli. At the end of the hall a left turn led, as through the looking glass, into an utterly different environment. The glitzy staging of the first half gave way to an almost dreary meander of dimly lit off-white partitions. Eyes adjusted, the visitor realized that here were dozens of major works by Botticelli and his contemporaries. The caesura was abrupt, almost shocking. Had we gone back in time? Had there been a curatorial falling out, and this was the resulting rapprochement?

Sequencing the myriad responses to Botticelli at the beginning of the show created a sort of retinal after-image. There was no way to view the originals but through the
kaleidoscope of the show’s first half – obviously the intention. However, once again, the Florentine’s pictures triumphed. At the center of the exhibition stood the two single figures of Venus, side by side on the same wall, alone together. The opportunity to compare these variations was revelatory. The differences became glaring, revealed across nearly every tract of her anatomy. In the Berlin version her hair is the erotic protagonist; in the Turin picture it is the diaphanous garment, barely there, that gently binds her arms and upper breast.

Stumbling out of the V&A onto Cromwell Road another Pope-Hennessy reminiscence awaited. The mash-up duality of the exhibition had sensitized me to the sharp stylistic and ideological contrast of the Brompton Oratory adjacent to the V&A. Sir John had directed the V&A, and the Oratory was his favorite London church and the site of his funeral mass. Worlds reconciled, or at least co-existent.

The Boston exhibition was far and away the most mainstream - in staging, context, and interpretive thesis. Amply sponsored, it was nevertheless presented in the modest ground-level gallery of the main MFA building, whose Neo-Renaissance frescoes evoking Boston as a New World cultural center, proximity to Fenway Court, and legacy of Boston’s collectors of early Italian painting all created a slightly archaic mental ambience for viewing Botticelli.

The Turin Venus – boldly presented as autograph in the gallery and the catalogue – was used for the come-hither banner outside the exhibition space. The show assembled small but astonishingly rich selection of works by Botticelli (Minerva and the Centaur, St. Augustine, several Madonnas, as well as the Venus) and his contemporaries, including Filippo and Filippino Lippi, Pollaiuolo and others. There were also notable objects, such as the death mask of Lorenzo il Magnifico.

The darkened gallery entry established an appropriate mood buffer. The exhibition’s title and precis were elegantly scripted across the obligatory theme wall, painted a rich – I was informed – Chianti red. However, none of the V&A show’s drunken, zig-zagging swagger was allowed in this proper Bostonian processional. The carpeted space was laid out in clear if strict symmetry with transverse partitions creating an axial series of “rooms.” The presentation was earnest, the environment hushed, the labels didactic.

In fact, the messaging was if anything a bit too educative. Ultimately, the overarching theme (“the search for the divine”) seemed an ill-fitting garment on many of the works, especially the one without clothing. To present the Turin Venus as an emblem of “the dual nature of Love, sacred and profane,” and seeming “to offer a subliminal warning of the mortal dangers of excessive sensuality” strikes me more as a long echo of the pilgrim fathers, if not the Puritans, than a contemporary response to this radical picture.

I think we need to admit that when Botticelli shed Venus’s entourage of figures and foam and placed the nearly naked female figure on display in varying states of tressed undress, the balance shifted far to the “sensual” end of the spectrum, even correcting for anachronism. This seems as close to a Quattrocento peep show as we’ll get: a gorgeous life-size figure draped in little more than a learned allusion. Have we lost our capacity to see how strange and direct this picture must have seemed in its time? Have we so suppressed our primal responses to these works?

In Boston no tangible reminder of Pope-Hennessy presented itself. However, I reckon that Sir John would have cut through the interpretive overlay of the presentation. At the V&A he would have critically separated wheat from chaff. And in Hong Kong I believe he would have relished the simplicity of the context. Most certainly, and palpably, he retained his great capacity to engage the work of art directly, and to feel viscerally the power of beauty.

**SPOTLIGHT ON EMERGING SCHOLARS**

*Presentation at the 2017 annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Chicago*

By Rachel Boyd, Ph.D. Candidate, Columbia University 2017 IAS Emerging Scholars Travel Grant Recipient

Andrea della Robbia’s ten roundels of infants in swaddling clothes are arguably the most well-known and widely recognized sculptures to survive from the entire three-generation span of the Della Robbia workshop. Installed on the loggia of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in 1487, they have remained a defining feature of Florence’s landscape for the past five hundred years. So expressive and endearing are Andrea’s compositions that they continue to be copied by local ceramicists and sold as souvenirs. To this day, descendants of Andrea’s bambini adorn schools and hospitals around the world, and one even serves as the official insignia of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Despite the continuing life of Andrea’s infants in popular culture, these bambini have received little sustained attention in scholarly literature on Renaissance sculpture. In fact, I suspect that the abundance of affordable adaptations, not always of the highest quality, has made it easy to underestimate the originality and individuality of Andrea’s creations. Furthermore, the iconography of
Andrea’s roundels appears to be exceedingly clear: the infants are often interpreted either as straightforward depictions of the young children whom it was the hospital’s mission to care for, or as the Innocent martyrs after whom the hospital was named. After almost three years of research in Florence, during which time I walked past the Ospedale degli Innocenti on a daily basis, I thought these roundels deserved a closer look. It seemed especially appropriate to do so this year, because the bambini had just emerged from a comprehensive cleaning and restoration project at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in 2015-2016. Thanks to the generosity of colleagues at the Opificio and the Museo degli Innocenti, I had a number of extraordinary opportunities to examine the tondi up-close during treatment, and then again before they were re-installed on the façade of the hospital. During these visits, it became clear to me that Andrea had gone to great lengths to differentiate the infants’ individual bodies and personalities, just as he had carefully cut the joins of the separate pieces of clay before firing and glazing (each roundel is composed of seven or eight interlocking segments) to ensure that they would align almost seamlessly.

My talk at the 2017 annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, therefore, focused on these bambini while also examining their contribution to the broader genre of the art and architecture of Renaissance hospitals. The use of glazed terracotta on the façade of the Innocenti set a new precedent that was quickly admired and closely imitated at two other nearby institutions: the Ospedale di San Paolo in Florence and the Ospedale del Ceppo in Pistoia.

Building upon Diana Bullen Presciutti’s important recent study of the visual culture of foundling hospitals, I argued that the Della Robbia’s medium of glazed terracotta itself offered unique visual effects that were particularly attractive to a charitable institution such as the Innocenti. The medium, developed by Andrea’s uncle, Luca della Robbia, earlier in the fifteenth century, endowed terracotta sculpture with new levels of permanence and splendor – qualities the sculptors achieved by covering the baked clay substrate with colorful, vitreous glazes. The sculpture’s surface reflectivity was fundamental to the meaning and function of many Della Robbia creations, from sacred images to coats of arms. On the one hand, reflective glazes allowed the workshop to depict the splendor of holy bodies in newly evocative ways, stressing their innate corporeality as well as their light-giving nature. On the other, the opacity and shine of glazed terracotta contributed to its success as a medium for architectural ornament, as the images produced were easily legible from a distance.

Andrea’s roundels for the Innocenti took full advantage of these nuanced expressive possibilities. His strong colors and simple compositions called attention to the hospital within an urban environment, while the reflective surfaces of the infants’ bodies allowed the young institution to make novel claims about the charity it provided. Andrea drew upon the spiritual associations of his glazed terracotta medium to create bodies that are multivalent: his roundels represent the actual foundlings abandoned to the hospital, while simultaneously alluding to the way in which the hospital cared for these children as if they were infant saints or even the Christ Child himself. Both the medium and the liminal location of Andrea’s sculptures, furthermore, served to highlight the bodily and spiritual transformations that the hospital made possible inside its walls.

I am very grateful to have been awarded the Italian Art Society’s Conference Travel Grant for Emerging Scholars. This grant supported my travel to Chicago for the RSA’s annual meeting, where I presented my research in one of three connected sessions on glazed terracotta sculpture in the Italian Renaissance. Thanks to the major Della Robbia exhibition held in Boston and Washington this past year, the 2017 conference was an ideal opportunity to exchange ideas generated from the objects brought together at the Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery of Art. Our RSA panels benefited from the expertise and enthusiastic participation of the exhibition’s curators, Marietta Cambareri and Alison Luchs, as well as other art historians and objects conservators, who highlighted recent discoveries made during treatment of sculptures sent to the exhibition.

The work I presented at RSA contributes to several arguments of my dissertation on the Della Robbia workshop (provisionally titled: “Experimentation and Specialization: The Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of the Della Robbia Workshop, c. 1430-1550”), so I was especially thankful for the questions and feedback I received from conference participants. Now, after three years of research based at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, I am expanding my Della Robbia investigations in collections outside Italy and, when not on the road, writing up my dissertation.

SPOTLIGHT ON EMERGING SCHOLARS

Presentation at the 2017 annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Chicago
By Katerina Harris, Ph.D. Candidate, New York University 2017 IAS Emerging Scholars Travel Grant Recipient

In April 2017 I presented a paper at the Renaissance Society of America’s annual meeting in Chicago. The paper
was titled “Renaissance Effigies Neither Dead nor Alive.” The session, sponsored by the Italian Art Society, was titled “Lying in State: The Effigy in Early Modern Italian Funerary Art ca. 1400-1600.” I was able to travel to Chicago thanks to the Italian Art Society’s Conference Travel Grant for Emerging Scholars.

The paper focused on a few Italian Renaissance effigies that are neither wholly inert nor wholly alert. They describe ambiguous, in-between conditions. They follow on from late medieval effigies that are strictly recumbent, and they precede early-sixteenth century effigies that sit up on their elbows. To introduce these effigies, my paper in Chicago began with a brief and select history of historiography. This brief and select history was told via Vernon Lee and John Ruskin.

In the early 1870s John Ruskin – Victorian art critic and Romantic – went to Lucca and fell in love. The object of his affections was the effigy of Ilaria del Carretto. Ruskin thought Ilaria beautiful because she was well-adjusted. She was brought together, he lauded, “in perfect and errorless balance.”(John Ruskin, The Works of John Ruskin, Vol. XXIII (Keston and Orpington, Kent: G. Allen, 1906), 222.) She was restrained, humble, serene, and recumbent. She was perfectly lifeless. Since Ruskin, Ilaria del Carretto has generally remained the elected representative of all that is good in Italian Renaissance funerary art: symmetry, poise, serenity and, last but not least, inertia. In his seminal 1964 survey of European tomb sculpture, Erwin Panofsky called the customary fifteenth-century Italian effigy “an image of a dead body, eyes closed and hands crossed.”(Erwin Panofsky, Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini, ed. H.W. Janson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 77.)

My project is not a corrective. I do not deny that many Italian Renaissance effigies are very still, and very dead. But my research does show that there are a-not-inconsiderable-few that are, somehow, a little alive: poised in the sense of being suspended rather than balanced. This not-quite-done effect was identified by Vernon Lee (the pseudonym of Violet Paget) — a contemporary of Ruskin. Lee thought Renaissance sculptors were pioneers because they prolonged death by presenting “the gentle and harmonious ebbing after-life of death in their sepulchral monuments.”(Vernon Lee, “The Portrait Art,” in Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Mediaeval in the Renaissance, Vol. II (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1884), 20.) This “ebbing after-life,” Lee (indirectly) suggests, is not often discussed because ebbing qualities, inconcrete and incomplete, are inherently “Things difficult to describe, and which must be seen and remembered.”(Ibid.) As confirmation of the challenge, the phrase “ebbing after-life of death” is itself a confusing contradiction in terms: How can death have an after-life? How can death live on?

My project annotates Lee’s complicated and fine-drawn “ebbing after-life” with both words and photographs (not necessarily in this order). Lee set the project in motion with two case studies. First, Italy’s most kissed statue: Tullio Lombardo’s effigy of Guidarelli Guidarelli (c. 1525) in the Galleria Nazionale in Ravenna. Lee describes the lingering vitality of Guidarelli’s body. She makes him vulnerable: “the body prone in its heavy case of armour, not yet laid out in state, but such as he may have been found in the evening, when the battle was over, under a tree […] the head has fallen back, sideways, weighed down by the helmet […] the eyes have not been closed.”(Ibid., 234-5.) The “ebbing after-life” is here a romantic state of ambiguous incompleteness: an open ending, either hopeful or hopeless, depending on the viewer’s wants and needs. The ambiguity of Guidarelli’s condition is suggested also by the portrait’s various imperfections, the not-quites. His eyes are not quite shut. His head is awkwardly placed and does not quite reach his pillow. And his carefully carved teeth draw attention to the fact that is mouth is not quite closed. These features do not describe death’s fixed state, but life’s flux and impermanence: Guidarelli is not quite eternal.

Lee’s second example of ebbing death is Desiderio da Settignano’s effigy of Carlo Marsuppini (c. 1453 to 1460) in Santa Croce in Florence. Like Guidarelli, Marsuppini has not long been dead, and, like Guidarelli, Marsuppini is, in Lee’s empathetic eyes, vulnerable. When she looks at Marsuppini, she sees his deathbed, and she sees him dying:

The slight figure looks as if in life it must have seemed almost transparent; and the hands are very pathetic: noble, firm hands, subtle of vein and wrist, crossed simply, neither in prayer nor in agony, but in gentle weariness, over the book on his breast […] in his last moments the noble old man has longed for a glance over the familiar pages; they have placed the book on his breast, but it has been too late; the drowsiness of death has overtaken him, and with his last sigh he has gently folded his hands over the volume, with the faint, last clinging to the things beloved in this world. (Ibid., 236.)

Again, the traces of life in this effigy are in the details — specifically, the almosts. His hands are covered with full veins, pulsing — well almost. His right thumb hovers over his left hand, brushing — well almost. He could almost be alive.

Traces of the “ebbing after-life” can be found on numerous Italian effigies. On close looking, dead bodies are not always as dead as they first seem. Il Vecchietta’s effigy of Mariano Sozzini (c. 1467) at the Bargello in Florence is one of several new cases I have found to add to Lee’s point. The veins...
on his hands and feet, like Marsuppini’s, bulge under his skin. There are signs of strain on his gaunt face: his loosely closed eyelids and his slightly parted, almost pursed, lips, together indicate some subtle, recently subdued, effort. And Sozzini is still moving: as his left hand crosses his right wrist, his left index finger flexes and hovers just above his hip, not yet, not quite, placed. My project documents a Renaissance interest in describing bodies somewhere between life and death. This interest in turn confirms an historic regard for the potential of ambiguity in art.

Many thanks to the Italian Art Society.

IN MEMORIAM

A Tribute to Brian A. Curran
By Jennifer Cochran Anderson, California State University, Long Beach, and Douglas N. Dow, Kansas State University

Brian Curran, a longstanding member of the Italian Art Society and former chair of the Nominating Committee, died from complications related to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig’s Disease) on July 11, 2017. Dr. Curran was a professor of Art History at the Pennsylvania State University for twenty years, a fellow of the Bibliotheca Hertziana, the American Academy in Rome, and the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at the Villa I Tatti. He was a graduate of Princeton University, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the Massachusetts College of Art. He was the author of The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy (University of Chicago Press, 2007), one of the co-authors of Obelisk: A History (Dibner Library/MIT Press, 2009), as well as the author of numerous journal articles and book chapters.

Brian was well known for his extensive erudition and his unbridled enthusiasm for artistic expression in all its many forms. From his scholarship on the Egyptian Renaissance, obelisks, bestiaries, sphinges, and pedagogy, to his most recent work on the social lives of statues, and his limitless knowledge of old Hollywood monster movies and ’60s and ’70s rock and roll, the hallmarks of Brian’s work are his tremendous knowledge, ongoing curiosity, incredible sensitivity to both his subject and his audience, and most especially his ability to see and make evident to others the interconnectedness and entanglements between subjects, places, people, and ideas across time and space.

As a beloved and award-winning teacher, Brian touched the lives of countless students. In his time at Penn State, Brian supervised more than a dozen doctoral students, mentored scores of master’s students, and inspired a love of art history in many of the thousands of undergraduates who passed through his classes. Watching Brian teach was an invaluable apprenticeship in pedagogy. He was an excellent storyteller. Brian had an uncanny ability to make even the most ancient and inaccessible genres of art live again in his classes. He frequently held all the hundreds of occupants in a cavernous lecture hall in rapt attention as his mind and his words leapt between the past and the present, drawing parallels and interweaving the daily experiences of his students with art and history in ways that honored and respected both. Furthermore, Brian’s friendship and mentorship did not end when his students completed their degrees. In their professional lives, he has continued to be a tireless cheerleader, a font of wisdom and advice, and an astute observer. He will be sorely missed.

For Brian working in academia was a vocation. This was made especially evident in the three years following his diagnosis. Brian did not retire, in fact, he continued to work on new projects, present at conferences, advise graduate students, advocate for healthcare justice, serve as president of the Penn State Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, and act as editor for the Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. He taught courses until May of 2017, scarcely two months before the end of his life. By that last semester, ALS had robbed from Brian his ability to walk, to physically hold his head up, and to speak loudly and clearly; it weakened him, made it difficult to breathe, and placed him in continual discomfort, yet in his desire to continue his work, he persisted. It was a truly Herculean act.

As with all else in his life, Brian studied and learned about his disease. He traveled to participate in research studies. In the summer of 2014, when Brian was diagnosed with sporadic ALS—the most common form of the disease without a known familial component which can affect anyone of us at any time—the ice bucket challenge went viral. He said that the increased awareness of the disease at the time of his diagnosis made him feel less alone. The $115 million generated by the ice bucket challenge for ALS research and services for patients and communities gave him hope that a cure would be found. Penn State’s Art History Department participated in the challenge late that summer, with Brian shouting the countdown ([https://youtu.be/UJII1gb66SU](https://youtu.be/UJII1gb66SU)). The money raised by the ice bucket challenge directly enabled the discovery of NEK1, a gene linked to the development of ALS in some cases (published in 2016 in Nature Genetics). It is hoped that with more research, attention, and funding more discoveries will be made.

ALS is a degenerative disease that affects the motor neurons of the brain and spinal cord. As the disease progresses, these motor neurons die and the muscles that they control become weak, leading to paralysis and eventually death. ALS is 100%
fatal. In the United States 6,000 people are diagnosed with ALS every year and as many as 20,000 people are currently living with the disease. A person dies from ALS every 90 minutes. Brian lived for 3 years from the time of his diagnosis in the summer of 2014 until his death this July, almost exactly the average survival length according to the ALS foundation. Please consider making a donation in Brian’s memory to the ALS Therapy Development Institute (www.ALS.net) or to the ALS Clinic at Johns Hopkins Hospital (https://secure.jhu.edu/form/als).

FALL 2017 EXHIBITIONS

New York New York/Arte Italiana: La riscoperta dell’America
Museo del Novecento, Milan
Through September 17, 2017

Curated by Francesco Tedeschi and featuring the work of twentieth-century Italian artists including Giorgio De Chirico, Fortunato Depero, Lucio Fontana, Emilio Isgrò, Arnaldo Pomodoro and Mimmo Rotella, this exhibition explores the relationship of Italian artists to New York and the United States. All the pieces on display have been made by Italian artists who have either traveled to the United States or have created work inspired by their conceptual understanding of American political, artistic, and social values.

Labirinti del cuore. Giorgione e la stagioni del sentimento tra Venezia e Roma
Museo nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia, Rome
Through September 17, 2017

Around 1502, Giorgio da Castelfranco (1478-1510), known as Giorgione, executed a famous double portrait depicting two male friends (Due amici). This exhibition aims to shed light on the Venetian Giorgione’s ties to Rome, as well as the historical and civic ties between Venice and the Eternal City, by a close analysis of this striking work of two unknown subjects. The exhibition takes love as its central theme and interprets the image as a representation of Neoplatonic love and how Giorgione allows the viewer to witness the dynamic journey of the ‘labirinto del cuore.’

Il cosmo magico di Leonardo da Vinci: l’Adorazione dei Magi restaurata
Gallerie degli Uffizi
Through September 24, 2017

Leonardo da Vinci’s unfinished panel of the Adoration of the Magi returns to the Uffizi after a five-year restoration at the Opificio della Pietre Dure in Florence. The process worked to preserve the color of the oil on canvas painting. The exhibit will also showcase the changes that took place in Florence over a two-year period in the late 15th century.

Giancarlo Vitali: Time Out
Palazzo Reale, Milan
Through September 24, 2017

This is the first retrospective of the painter Giancarlo Vitali (b. 1929), whose career spans more than seventy years. The exhibition is curated by Vitali’s son, Velasco, and includes over four hundred of his drawings, paintings, and engravings, from his earliest career to recent works that have never before been seen by the public. This massive exhibition is spread out over four sites in Milan, including the Palazzo Reale, Sforza Castle, the Natural Science Museum, and Casa del Manzoni.

La fabbrica della bellezza. La manifattura Ginori e il suo popolo di statue
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence
Through October 1, 2017

This exhibition celebrates the exceptional porcelain artworks created at the Richard Ginori Manufactory. Included are wax, terracotta and bronze works that served, either wholly or partially, as models of porcelain works detailing the extraordinary and magnificent 18th-century works collected by marquis Carlo Ginori from the studios and workshops of sculptors from the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque periods.

Giovanni da Rimini: A 14th-Century Masterpiece Unveiled
National Gallery, London
Through October 8, 2017
In 2015, the National Gallery purchased Giovanni da Rimini’s (1292-1336) Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and other Saints and in 2017, will reunite the painting with another panel depicting Scenes from the life of Christ, housed in the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica in Rome. The two have long been thought to comprise a diptych. Presented with loans including works by contemporaries of Giovanni da Rimini, the exhibition aims to paint a thorough picture of artistic production in Trecento Rimini, which was influenced both by late-Byzantine icons and a new, more expressive style. (See review above)

**Velázquez e Bernini: autoritratti in mostra**
*Nobile Collegio del Cambio, Perugia*
Through October 22, 2017

The reciprocal influence between these two Baroque masters, Diego Velázquez and Gianlorenzo Bernini, are approached through the lens of their self-portraits in this exciting exhibition. Included are self-portraits of Bernini and Velázquez from the Uffizi, as well as portraits of Bernini from Musée Fabre di Montpellier and the Prado. Bernini and Velázquez, who may have encountered each other through their works, as well as Velázquez’s two Italian sojourns (1629-30, 1650), are here examined as participants in a mutually beneficial exchange. This exhibition provides a rare opportunity to examine Bernini primarily as a painter.

**Estate Italiana**
*Lancaster Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA*
Through October 22, 2017

The relationship between contemporary Italian artists and celebrated early modern masters such as Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci is the focus of an upcoming exhibition at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History. How Italian artists today engage with the past and grapple with the looming shadows of Renaissance and Baroque masters will be addressed in a show that includes works in painting, sculpture, and video. The exhibition is curated by Cynthia Penna of the Naples-based cultural institution ART 1307 and features the artists Max Coppeta, Marco Casentini, Nicola Evangelisti, Carlo Marcucci, Antonella Masetti, Alex Pinna & Carla Viparelli. (See review above)

**Lucio Fontana: Crosses**
*Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne*
Through October 28, 2017

This is the first comprehensive exhibition dedicated entirely to a group of crucifixes from the ceramic works of twentieth-century artists Lucio Fontana, with 20 small-scale sculptures, whose figurative composition draws on motifs of Christian iconography, as its focal point. (See review above)

**Antinous, the Emperor’s Beloved: Investigating a Roman Portrait**
*San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX*
Through November 26, 2017

This exhibition focuses on a single work in the museum’s permanent collection, an ancient Roman portrait of Antinous, a youth beloved by the Emperor Hadrian. Recent scientific examinations of the portrait bust have revealed traces of gilding and the exhibition aims to share this and other revelations, as well as the many phases of restoration that have brought the work to its current appearance. The exhibition also features loans from the J. Paul Getty Museum, the American Numismatic Society, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

**Omaggio al Granduca: i piatti d’argento per la festa di San Giovanni**
*Palazzo Pitti, Tesoro dei Granduchi*
Through November 5, 2017

Curated by Rita Balleri and Maria Sframeli and opening on the feast day of St. John the Baptist, patron of Florence, this exhibition seeks to re-examine the silver plates connected to the Medici Grand dukes of the 17th and 18th centuries. While most of the original works do not survive, preparatory drawings for them, by Roman artists including Ciro Ferri and Carlo Maratta, are...
included, along with plaster casts made by the Ginori factory in 1746-48 to create porcelain reproductions.

Magister Giotto
Scuola Grande della Misericordia, Venice
Through November 5, 2017

This exhibition will be the first of a trilogy of annual exhibitions dedicated to masters of Italian art, one for each period including the late Middle Ages (Giotto), the Renaissance (Raphael), and the Neoclassical Period (Canova). Magister Giotto, will be on view for fall/summer 2017, the 750th anniversary of Giotto’s birth. The virtual exhibition aims to be a multisensory journey through the life and art of Giotto through a series of images of his most famous works narrated by the voice of actor Luca Zingaretti and accompanied by the music of Paolo Fresu. The monumental space of the Scuola Grande della Misericordia provides a striking venue (in Venice, the space is only second to the Palazzo Ducale in terms of exhibition space) for Magister Giotto.

Casanova: the Seduction of Europe
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX
Through December 31, 2017

This exhibition aims to explore eighteenth-century Europe through an examination of one of its most intriguing and flamboyant characters, Giacomo Casanova (1725-98). Bringing together painting, sculpture, drawing, prints, and decorative arts, this exhibition aims to animate the world of the well-traveled Casanova, who met Catherine the Great in Saint Petersburg and also visited the Ottoman Empire. After Fort Worth, the exhibition will be on view at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Leonardo to Matisse: Master Drawings from the Robert Lehman Collection
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
October 4, 2017 - January 7, 2018

This upcoming exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art will trace European drawing from the Renaissance to the twentieth century through works by Leonardo da Vinci, Dürer, Rembrandt, Tiepolo, Ingres, Seurat, and Matisse. A variety of subjects, styles, and techniques will be on display in a selection of fifty-five of Robert Lehman’s collection of over 700 drawings, chosen to reflect the range of his activity and interest as a collector of works on paper. Highlights include Leonardo’s Study of a Bear and Rembrandt’s interpretation of Leonardo’s masterpiece, The Last Supper.

Carlo Bononi: L’ultimo sognatore dell’Officina ferrarese
Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara
October 14, 2017 - January 7, 2018

This fall, the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara will be the site of an exhibition dedicated to one of the great (but lesser known) painters of the seventeenth century, Carlo Bononi (1569-1632). Curated by Giovanni Sassu and Francesca Cappelletti, it will be the first comprehensive exhibition of Bononi’s work. A painter of mythological scenes, as well as of great sacred decorative and altarpiece cycles, Bononi elaborated a pictorial language that focused on emotion, as well as the intimate and sentimental relationship between painted figures and the observer. Shortly after Carlo’s death, the “divine” Guido Reni described him as a great painter whose work was endowed with a great wisdom in disegno and strength in color.

The Medici’s Painter: Carlo Dolci and 17th Century Florence
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University
Through January 14, 2018

This will be the first exhibition in the United States devoted to the drawings and paintings of Carlo Dolci (1616-87). Curated by IAS member Eve Straussman-Pflanzer, the exhibition includes over fifty autograph works on loan from both major museums and private collections. Lenders include the Uffizi Gallery and Palazzo Pitti in Florence, the Louvre Museum in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of

**Giovanni Bellini: Landscapes of Faith in Renaissance Venice**
*The Getty Center, Los Angeles*
October 10, 2017 - January 14, 2018

Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516) masterfully combined natural elements and sacred subjects, and it is this characteristic of his work that is focus of an upcoming exhibition at the Getty. His religious scenes set in highly symbolic landscapes marked a new chapter in the history of European painting, and the exhibition aims to shed light on how Bellini utilized natural features to enhance his devotional subject matter. Twelve of Bellini’s landscapes will be on view, including loans from the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. A catalogue edited by Davide Gasparotto will accompany this exhibition.

**Il Cinquecento a Firenze: Tra Michelangelo, Pontormo, e Giambologna**
*Palazzo Strozzi, Florence*
September 21, 2017 – January 21, 2018

An exhibition devoted to the art of the 16th century in Florence, showcasing over seventy works of art by such artists as Michelangelo, Bronzino, Giorgio Vasari, Rosso Fiorentino, Pontormo, Santi di Tito, Giambologna and Bartolomeo Ammannati. This exhibit is the final act in a trilogy of exhibitions curated by Carlo Falciani and Antonio Natali, which began with *Bronzino* in 2010 and was followed by *Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino* in 2014. It explores an era of outstanding cultural and intellectual talent marked both by the Council of Trent and its Counter-Reformation, and by the personality of Francesco I de’ Medici.

**Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer**
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*
November 13, 2017 - February 12, 2018

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) will be the subject of what the Metropolitan Museum of Art has described as a “once-in-a-lifetime” exhibition of his work. His technical abilities and his excellence in drawing and invention (*disegno*) will be illustrated through a massive display of his drawings, early paintings, marble sculptures, and an architectural model for a chapel vault. The exhibition will include approximately 150 of his total works, including loans from 54 public and private collections in the United States and Europe. International loans will include a series of drawings he executed for his friend Tommaso de’ Cavalieri and a cartoon for his final fresco in the Vatican Palace.

**Old Masters Now: Celebrating the Johnson Collection**
*The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA*
November 3, 2017 - February 19, 2018

In 1917, John G. Johnson left his collection of European art to the city of Philadelphia and today the collection forms a cornerstone of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Arranged chronologically, the exhibition aims to shed light on how the understanding and appreciation of the more than 1500 works in the Johnson Collection have evolved over time. Rich in Early Italian (including Giovanni di Paolo, Antonello da Messina, and Titian) and Netherlandish paintings, the Johnson Collection also includes one of the world’s largest collections of Dutch Golden Age and Impressionist paintings.

**Lucio Fontana: Ambienti/Environments**
*Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan*
September 21, 2017 - February 25, 2018

An Italian painter, sculptor, and theorist of Argentine birth, Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) is mostly known for his ties to Arte Povera and as the founder of Spatialism. “Ambienti/Environments” is focused on Fontana’s pioneering work in the realm of installation art, with a selection of his seminal Ambienti spaziali (“Spatial Environments”). Beginning in the 1940s, Fontana conceived of a series of rooms and corridors and designed them as temporary environments that would nearly always be destroyed once the exhibition was over. In this upcoming display, some of the environments on view have been reconstructed for the first
time since the artist’s death through the research of art historian Marina Pugliese and art conservator Barbara Ferriani.

**Veronese in Murano: Two Venetian Renaissance Masterpieces Restored**

_The Frick Collection, New York_

_October 24, 2017 - March 11, 2018_

This focused exhibition organized by Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Xavier F. Salomon centers on two recently conserved (and rarely seen) paintings by Paolo Veronese (1528-88), *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness* and *Saint Peter Visiting Saint Agatha in Prison*. The paintings are housed in a church in Murano, making them largely inaccessible to most general audiences and difficult for scholars to study. Their presence in New York will provide an opportunity for visitors to discover these two masterpieces.

**Modigliani**

_Tate Modern_

_November 23, 2017 – April 2, 2018_

During his brief and turbulent life, Modigliani developed a unique and instantly recognisable pictorial style. Though meeting little success during their time, his emotionally intense portraits and seductive nudes are now among the best-loved paintings of the 20th century. Modigliani’s nudes are a highlight of the exhibition – with 12 nudes on display, this is the largest group ever reunited in the UK. These sensuous works proved controversial when they were first shown in 1917, leading police to censor his only solo exhibition on the grounds of indecency. Also included are his lesser-known but radical and thought-provoking sculptures, as well as his portraits of his friends, lovers and supporters, including Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi and his partner Jeanne Hébuterne.

For regional exhibitions in Italy, see the “Mostre in Evidenza” section of the [Ministero dei Beni e delle Attivita Culturali e del Turismo](https://www.miact.it) (MiBACT) website.

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**NEWS AND NOTES**

**The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford** will hold a [conference on Italian majolica](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/art-design/italian-majolica-conference-237751262/) on 22-23 September. Bringing together numerous specialists from all over Europe and the US, the event marks Timothy Wilson’s retirement and the publication of his catalogue of the museum’s majolica collection.

**Film director Franco Zeffirelli** donated his entire archive and library to the city of Florence. The donation, which includes drawings, notes, scripts, press releases and personal correspondence, forms the core of a new institute, the International Center for the Performing Arts. The Center, located in Piazza San Firenze, opened on September 1.

**Tracy Ehrlich**, Smithsonian Institution Senior Fellow for 2016-17, will be presenting a Drawings Lecture at Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum on Friday November 3, 2017 at 1pm. Her talk is entitled “Carlo Marchionni and the Art of Conversation: Architectural Drawing and Social Space in Eighteenth-Century Rome.” The lecture will take place in the lower level lecture hall, Cooper Hewitt Museum, 2 East 91st Street, New York.

**The first part of the Vasari corridor**, connecting Palazzo Vecchio to the Uffizi, has been [reopened to the public](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-design/art-architectural-drawings-social-space-rome-237751262/). Commissioned by Cosimo I de’ Medici and realized by Giorgio Vasari in 1565, the corridor was previously open only sporadically as part of a guided tour.

**A large contingent of IAS members** will present papers at the conference “Early Modern Rome 3: 1341-1667.” The conference, organized by the University of California, Rome, will be held October 5-7, in Rome and at the Castello di Bracciano. Speakers include Matthew Averett, Cristelle Baskins, Katherine Bentz, Molly Bourne, Danielle Carrabino, Alexis Culotta, Sharon Dale, Erin Downey, Sheila ffolliott, Cristiana Filippini, Alison Fleming, Heather Graham, Stephanie Leone, Livia Lui, Linda Nolan, Sheryl Reiss, Katherine Rinne, Tamara Smithers, and Kim Butler Wingfield.

**A Swedish academic triggered an investigation** that has [uncovered a network of Italian art thefts](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-design/art-architectural-drawings-social-space-rome-237751262/). The academic bought a manuscript online, but once he received it he started doubting its provenance, alerting the Italian embassy. The Carabinieri thus discovered numerous rare artworks that had been reported stolen in the warehouse of a Turin book dealer.

**Researchers** from University of Oregon, Stanford, and Dartmouth have co-developed a new digital archive of nearly 4,000 drawings, prints, paintings and photographs of historic Rome that is now available online to the public. UO architecture Professor James Tice, principal investigator for [The Rodolfo Lanciani Digital Archive](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-design/art-architectural-drawings-social-space-rome-237751262/), notes the project makes accessible “a precious archival collection and demonstrates how similar materials can be made available to...
scholars, students and the general public through the digital humanities.”

Magazzino, a new museum of Italian postwar and contemporary art, is now open. The large building, located in the Hudson Valley just north of New York City, opened on 28 June with an exhibition on Margherita Stein, an Italian dealer associated with Arte Povera artists and circles related to that movement.

The IAS seeks session proposals for the annual meeting of the interdisciplinary American Association of Italian Studies (AAIS). In 2018, the conference will be held 14-17 June at the Sant’Anna Institute in Sorrento, Italy. IAS members interested in putting together a panel on any topic of Italian art (broadly conceived to include also architecture, cinema, etc.) should send a brief abstract (100 words max), session title, a short list of potential or desired speakers (they need not be confirmed), and a one-page CV. Submit by 1 November 2017 to programs@italianartsociety.org.

A new museum on Baroque art was inaugurated in a former convent in Noto, Sicily, on 26 July. The museum complex also hosts a section dedicated to the aristocratic families that commissioned various southern Baroque architects to build their palaces.

The Colosseum in Rome has now become an independent archaeological park as part of the reform brought forward by Dario Franceschini, Italy’s Minister for Culture. After strong opposition, judges approved the proposal, and the new Parco Archeologico is now looking for a director.

MEMBER PUBLICATIONS 2017

Congratulations to IAS members who have recently published books: You can purchase these books through the Amazon link on the Member Publications page, which earns IAS a small percentage return.


Another IAS member contributed an essay to this volume: Sharon Hecker. “Luciano Fabro: Bitter Sweets for Nadezhda Mandelstam,” 121-140.


Vella also contributed an essay in this volume: “Three recently restored Renaissance paintings by Antonio de Saliba on Malta,” 47-66.
Congratulations to IAS members who have recently published articles and essays:


Italian Art Society Membership and Donations

Please join or renew your IAS membership today. Members are encouraged to pay online through our user-friendly website. If you wish to send a check, please direct it to Martha Dunkelman, IAS Treasurer, 90 Riverside Drive, #16C, New York, New York 10024. There are now four levels of membership. The IAS will continue to offer Student membership at $20.00 and Regular membership at $30.00. Our Patron membership at $60.00 allows generous members to support programming, awards, charitable activities, and additional endeavors, including our Thirtieth Anniversary celebration in 2017. A Benefactor/Institutional membership at $100.00 has also been added. Institutional members include programs, institutions, or universities that want to promote the study of Italian art and architecture through support of the IAS. Thank you for your continued membership. Please encourage students, colleagues and institutions to join.

As a non-profit organization, the IAS seeks donations from individuals and organizations wishing to promote the study of the visual arts and architecture of Italy, from prehistory to the present. Funds will help support the IAS’s annual operations, including travel grants for graduate students and emerging scholars who are presenting their work at conferences in the USA and abroad, as well as research and publication grants. The IAS seeks general operating contributions, and is also happy to work with donors to direct contributions toward specific purposes, including travel grant support and the establishment of research or publication funds. If you have questions, please e-mail Martha Dunkelman, treasurer@italianartsociety.org.

Newsletter Contributions and Notices

IAS members are warmly encouraged to write for upcoming issues of the IAS Newsletter. For the spring issue, we are looking for reviews of winter shows listed in the exhibition section, news of recent conservation campaigns in Italy, and articles on research topics or new methodologies. If you are interested in writing a feature (approximately 800-1200 words), please contact the editor at any time, or by January 1 for the next issue. Deadlines for the IAS newsletters are: Fall Newsletter: news deadline August 15/publication date September 15; Winter Newsletter: news deadline January 15/publication date February 15; Spring Newsletter: news deadline April 1/publication date May 1.

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