

IAS-Sponsored Session Information
AAIS 2019

Sessions:

Character Portraits: Invention and Ekphrasis I & II

Sessions Organizer:

Shelley Zuraw

Sessions Chairs:

Shelley Zuraw and Shannon Pritchard

When and Where:

Friday March 15

Room 1617

Session I: 9-10:30

Session II: 10:55-12:15

Session I: Character Portraits and Vasari

Chair: Shelley Zuraw

Speaker: Tiffanie P. Townsend

Title: "Rosso Fiorentino and Portraits of Eccentricity"

Speaker: Michael P. Kemling

Title: "Vasari, Condivi, Vasari: The Many Faces of Michelangelo"

Speaker: Shannon N. Pritchard

Title: "Giambologna's Bronze Self-Portrait: Artists Speaking to Artists Through Self-Image"

Session II: Character Portraits: Vasari and Beyond

Chair: Shannon Pritchard

Speaker: Shelley E. Zuraw

Title: "Vasari's Tale of a Woman Sculptor: Truth is Stranger than Fiction"

Speaker: Julia L. Valiela

Title: "A Renaissance Woman Engraver in Image and Text"

Speaker: Laura L. Watts

Title: "Realizing the Risorgimento: Two Pictorial Statements by Francesco Hayez, 1827 and 1867"

Paper Abstracts (both sessions):

Tiffanie P. Townsend Abstract

“Rosso Fiorentino and Portraits of Eccentricity”

Rosso Fiorentino's tendency not to include symbolic personal props in the many portraits attributed to him has made identifying his sitters nearly impossible. With even less iconographic information provided than in his other portraits, his *Portrait of a Young Man* in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie has been proposed as a self-portrait, with no evidence to support the identification save the red hair of the sitter, the trait which gave the artist his nickname. This paper acknowledges that that identification is almost certainly erroneous; rather I seek to address the reasons why that identification is so compelling. Unlike the other, more traditional portraits given to Rosso, the moody and slouching man in the Berlin panel begs a backstory, and I believe this has led to a correlation inspired by an accepted, though literary, portrait of the artist. Vasari's turbulent Life of Rosso describes a handsome, troubled young artist, a man who was at times elegant and gentle and, at others, paranoid and peculiar, even violent. This paper will explore Vasari's vivid portrayal of this strange character, as well as our desire not just to see that man pictured, but that it be a revelation by the artist himself, verifying his odd persona.

Michael P. Kemling Abstract

“Vasari, Condivi, Vasari: The Many Faces of Michelangelo”

In 1550, Giorgio Vasari published the first edition of his *Vite* with the final and culminating life being that of Michelangelo. The entire enterprise can be interpreted as Vasari's attempt to justify the Michelangelo's genius. Although Michelangelo spent most of his career concerned with his public persona, he apparently did not approve of Vasari's account. In 1553 he asked Ascanio Condivi to write a new biography, which is widely believed to have been dictated by Michelangelo. Among the numerous differences, Condivi includes a detailed description of Michelangelo's facial features. When placed in the context of the previous portraits of the artist, the passage can be seen as an extension of Michelangelo's desire to further his social and artistic identities. Remarkably, Condivi's passage had an immediate impact, as we see artists adopting Michelangelo's features as their own. Vasari appears to have also seen the value of the passage as he included it *verbatim* in his revised 1568 edition. In turn, Vasari's second biography of Michelangelo served not only as a model for how any artist should live and work, but also look. This paper examines how Condivi and Vasari employed their descriptions differently: the same portrait was used to construct two distinct types of the ideal artist.

Shannon N. Pritchard Abstract

“Giambologna’s Bronze Self-Portrait: Artists Speaking to Artists Through Self-Image”

Giambologna’s self-portrait in bronze from 1599 is a visual statement of all the Flemish artist had achieved in his forty-one years of service to the Medici court. This bust-length portrait shows the artist in an elegant outfit with a traditional Northern European ruffled collar, looking very much the aristocrat: regal, confident, and wealthy. Further enhancing his air of sophistication is the cross prominently displayed on his left breast, the Order of Knights of Christ, which had been awarded to the artist by Pope Alexander VII in the same year as the self-portrait. The finely chased and highly polished bronze gives the self-portrait a monumentality that belies its actual size, which is a diminutive 3 ½” inches. While the function of this small self-portrait (known in three bronzes and one painted plaster) is not fully known, its form and content was most certainly influenced by the courtly aesthetic manifested in Medicean Florence. It also reveals the artist’s awareness of both traditional form and innovative developments in portraiture by his Northern compatriots. Moreover, this self-portrait is a visual manifestation of various documents, including two contemporary biographies (Giorgio Vasari and Raffaello Borghini), and letters written by or about Giambologna, which present an image of an artist in high demand, aware of his status, and concerned about his legacy (both financially and artistically). This paper will examine Giambologna’s small self-portrait within this historical context, arguing that the artist deliberately represented himself in a manner that bound together his Northern heritage with his celebrated status as an artist/knight, thereby placing him among the international artistic elite whose faces were as famous as their art.

Shelley E. Zuraw Abstract

“Vasari’s Tale of a Woman Sculptor: Truth is Stranger than Fiction”

Vasari’s 1550 edition of the Lives includes a brief biography of a woman whose work he had recently seen in Bologna—Properzia de’Rossi. In 1568 he expanded her life to include mention of other female artists. His *vita* and her life remain one of the most important, if puzzling, narratives of female artistic talent in the Renaissance. In her 2012 article on this problem, Sally Quinn acknowledges that “details of Properzia’s training remain unknown.” This despite the fact that she apparently began as a carver of fruit stones, a choice that, according to Vasari, she made because of her “*ingegno*” and then she moved, without difficulty, to marble carving at San Petronio. Vasari is, in almost every life, obsessed with the artist’s training. Equally, he ends most lives with a list of the master’s students. His book is a genealogy of artistic training. If he does not know the teacher or master, he is willing to make it up. Properzia, however, appears without a master and without training. Certainly this seeming lack underscores her uniqueness and her femininity—fruit stones being the detritus of the kitchen seem a good material for woman’s work, even if it is carving. Yet learning to carve marble was even more extraordinary; as testified to by the struggles of Raphael and Cellini, two exceptional artists in other media already. And it should be noted that in the Bolognese shop overseeing the marble decoration for the façade of San Petronio early exposure to marble carving did not seem necessary--witness Amico Aspertini and Alfonso Lombardi. This paper addresses the role of training—education and tradition—in Vasari’s life of Properzia and how it should alter our perception of her and her *vita*.

Julia L. Valiela Abstract

"A Renaissance Woman Engraver in Image and Text"

Sculpted and printed portraits of Renaissance women artists have attracted considerably less study than painted examples, such as the well-known portrayals of Sofonisba Anguissola and Lavinia Fontana. In response, this paper will examine the visual and textual representations of Diana Mantuana (or Diana Scultori, ca. 1547-1612), an accomplished female engraver who worked in Mantua and Rome. Her portrait medal (e.g., British Museum, London) will offer valuable insight into the representational options open to sixteenth-century women artists in general and acceptable formats and materials in particular. The medal's novel reverse depicts the artist's hand in the act of engraving. Special consideration will be given to the motif's relationship to similar gestures in other artist portraits and to the concepts of *disegno* and *invenzione*. The medal will emerge as a bold, albeit gendered, announcement of Diana's artistic practice. The complementary medal of her husband, architect Francesco da Volterra, will be shown to validate as well as temper this assertion. These medallic portraits will prove analogous to the carefully worded signatures and inscriptions on Diana's prints, which Evelyn Lincoln has discussed as calculated efforts to drum up business and build a public reputation. Contemporary reception of Diana's profession and work will be gleaned from a portrait engraving attributed to Cherubino Alberti and Giorgio Vasari's comments in the second edition of the *Lives of the Artists*. Together these images and texts will shed light on the public identity deemed appropriate for a female engraver and her shrewd adaptation of male artists' career development strategies.

Laura L. Watts Abstract

"Realizing the Risorgimento: Two Pictorial Statements by Francesco Hayez, 1827 and 1867"

Giuseppe Mazzini, writing in London in 1840, called Francesco Hayez (1791-1882), the Venetian-born, Roman-trained painter established in Milan, "The most advanced artist we know in the feeling of the Ideal that is called upon to govern all works of the Era."ⁱThe era he's referencing, the Risorgimento, was politically volatile, and Hayez was its most powerful pictorial voice. Two of his paintings bookend the age, with Hayez appearing among the cast of characters in both. In his *Pietro l'Ermita*, based on Tommaso Grossi's epic poem *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* of 1826, he paints himself as one of the crusaders. Syntactically, the placement of his visage says more about his sympathy with the gathering storm of the Risorgimento, than a historical reenactment. Likewise, and even more personally, his *Gli Ultimi Momenti di Marin' Faliero* of 1867, based on Lord Byron's play of 1821, portrays Hayez's disillusionment with the Risorgimento and his disenchantment with the new State. This paper investigates how although these are not his only historiated self-portraits, they indicate two distinct points in the artist's interaction with history, with literature, and with painting. At one point, he demonstrated a young man's optimism, a champion for pictorial and political reform; at a much later point, he performed the role of one left behind, by his colleagues and his country. Hayez does not comment on his appearance in either, but his first-hand accounts of the politically charged era, not to mention his consistent handling of literary sources, evokes the story of an artist and his time.

ⁱ G. Mazzini, "Modern Italian Painters," *London and Westminster Review* (1840).