Materiality of Terracotta Sculpture 1400 - 1600 (Warsaw, 18-19 Jun 20)

Warsaw, Jun 18–19, 2020
Deadline: Jan 15, 2020

Zuzanna Sarnecka

Modelled, Fired, Transformed: Materiality of Terracotta Sculpture 1400 - 1600
June 18 – 19 2020 Warsaw, Poland

Terracotta has long suffered from the view that it is merely an auxiliary medium, to be analyzed primarily in relation to its role as a building material or its preparatory use in the design of more prestigious bronze or marble sculptures. Yet in recent decades scholars have shown that terracotta sculpture revolutionized the Italian fifteenth-century art scene and during the sixteenth century its artistic significance resonated in other parts of Europe. The success of terracotta sculpture at that time should be credited to the technical ingenuity, including glazing its surface, believed in the Renaissance to have been unknown in antiquity and therefore artistically and intellectually innovative.
The growing field of studies of terracotta sculpture contributed to the re-evaluation of the material but at the same time it divided small-scale terracotta figurines from large-scale sculptures. The arbitrary distinctions into the fine art and the applied arts, with the latter category often dismissed as purely decorative, obscured the image of the artistic production and neglected the technical similarities between the two products. However, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all terracotta sculptures solicited a complementary range of interactions through the agency of their material and form.
Modern conservation research assists art historians in thinking about the practice, artistic technique and production of terracotta sculpture. Various teams of conservators use similar methods to analyse small- and large-scale artefacts. This provides a scientific justification for inclusive examination of terracotta sculpture from that period. This two-day conference held at the University of Warsaw will offer a possibility of the full exchange of ideas between researchers working on terracotta as a sculptural material.

We invite proposals that address the following issues related to the terracotta sculpture 1400-1600:

- Production: commissioning, executing and transporting terracotta sculpture
- Function: both secular and religious contexts, beyond terracotta's auxiliary role
- Reception: the impact of scale, indoor and outdoor display, architectural setting, polychromed and gilded surfaces
- Conservation: technological investigation into the material properties of fifteenth- and sixteenth--century terracotta

- Critical fortune: impact that subsequent criticism, scholarship, reproduction, and collecting practices had on the study of Renaissance terracottas

The opening plenary lecture will be delivered by Dr Marietta Cambareri (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). The invited keynote speaker is Professor Giancarlo Gentilini (Università
degli Studi di Perugia).

The organisers hope to be able to offer a number of travel grants to accepted speakers. Please indicate whether you require financial support to present your research in Warsaw.

Please email a title, abstract of maximum 300 words, and a CV to Zuzanna Sarnecka (z.sarnecka@uw.edu.pl) and Agnieszka Dziki (dzikiagnieszka@gmail.com) by January 15, 2020. Include your full name, email address and current affiliation. We will be grateful if you could express your interest in turning your paper into a publication in conference proceedings. Successful applicants will be notified by January 30, 2020.

Reference:

CFP: Materiality of Terracotta Sculpture 1400 - 1600 (Warsaw, 18-19 Jun 20). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 25, 2019 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/22166>.