

## Novelty, Trade and Exchange in the Renaissance Interior

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NOVELTY, TRADE AND EXCHANGE  
IN THE RENAISSANCE INTERIOR

Research Department  
Victoria & Albert Museum  
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During the Renaissance, Italians travelled extensively and individuals often were based in foreign branches of Italian companies. The goods they acquired and brought home helped to establish new fashions and to generate a taste for novelty. The house and its contents reflected and supported 'national' and international trade and exchange: apart from artefacts produced in Italian centres, Flemish tapestries, metalwork and paintings, German stoneware, English pewter, Baltic amber, Spanish pottery and leather goods all featured in the Italian interior. But goods were not only imported from Europe: Islamic carpets, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and other objects, whether purchased or looted, also figured prominently.

This two-day Symposium is the first in a series of events related to 'The Domestic Interior in Italy, 1400-1600', a research project culminating in a major exhibition at the V&A in 2006 and an associated publication (see below). 'Novelty, Trade and Exchange in the Renaissance Interior' will explore the general question of novelty in domestic goods. In addition to examining the stylistic influences of imported wares on local production, and the economics of trade and manufacture, it will focus on the movements of both goods and people across and into Italy.

(Event sponsored by the AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior and the Victoria & Albert Museum)

### SPEAKERS TO INCLUDE:

Patricia Allerston (University of Edinburgh): "'Contrary to the truth and also to the emblance of reality'? Alternative Readings of a Venetian Mercantile Family's Camera del Parto (1605)'

Anna Contadini (School of Oriental and African Studies): 'The Acquisition and Use of Islamic Artefacts'

Gail L. Geiger (University of Wisconsin-Madison): 'Racial "Exoticism" in the Decorative Arts'

Anja Grebe (Germanisches Nationalmuseum): 'Scrittoio and Studiolo: On the Early History of Two Types of Furniture'

Eloy Koldeweij (Netherlands Department for Conservation): 'Corami d'oro: Did Interiors Glitter? Fashionable Gilt Leather Hangings'

Deborah Krohn (Bard Graduate Centre, New York): 'Say it with Eels: Towards the Material Culture of Food in Early Modern Italy'

Rosamond E. Mack (Independent scholar): 'The Rising Status of the Oriental Carpet: Contributing Factors'

Ann Matchette (University of Sussex): 'Out with the Old, in with the New? Disposing Household Furnishings in Florence'

Paula Nuttall (Independent scholar): 'Netherlandish Painted Cloths in Italy: Fashion, Form and Function'

Isabella Palumbo Fossati (Independent scholar): 'Opulence and Cosmopolitanism: The Venetian Commoner's Domestic Interior'

Maria Ruvoldt (Cooper-Hewitt Masters Program, New York): 'Sacred to Secular, East to West: The Renaissance Study and Strategies of Display'

Cinzia Sicca (National Gallery of Art, Washington): 'From Lucca to London, and Back: The Buonvisi and Gigli Houses from the Fifteenth to the Sixteenth Century'

## REGISTRATION

Full delegate fee: £40

Student delegate fee: £20

Fee includes sandwich lunch, morning coffee and afternoon tea.

Deadline for registration: 10 June 2003

Spaces are limited, so early booking is essential.

Please complete and return this booking form along with a cheque, made payable to Royal College of Art, to AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU.

For further information see the website: [www.rca.ac.uk/csdi/](http://www.rca.ac.uk/csdi/) or contact AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior:

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## THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR IN ITALY, 1400-1600

The purpose of this project is to explore the urban house in Renaissance Italy as a setting for the development of art and culture, and for the unfolding of everyday life. Looking at the domestic interior provides unique insights into the unprecedented quality and wealth of objects produced for the home at the time - ranging from the artistic to the utilitarian. The evidence available is extensive and offers a complex picture. Contemporary depictions of interiors illustrate a wide range of domestic settings, suggesting geographical, ethnic and social variety alongside aesthetic diversity and development. These sources raise a number of challenging questions about the actual visual and spatial development of the house and its furnishings. Domestic artefacts can also powerfully illustrate the ways the wider cultural, artistic and socio-economic changes we associate with the Renaissance actually affected people's everyday lives. The impressive quantity, range and novelty of objects provided for the home demand examination in relation to new ideas of civility and decorum, and new notions of fashion and taste. Written sources often present the house as an extension of the self, thus provoking enquiry into the relationship between the interior and concepts of identity, gender and the body. As attractive as it is little-known, the Italian domestic interior demands new research and interpretation.

The project, which was launched in September 2002, is to research and develop an exhibition and a book on the Italian domestic interior between c.1400 and c.1600. The exhibition will be held at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London in 2006 and is likely to travel to another venue. Drawn from the V&A and other collections (including art and design, archaeological and ethnographic museums), this major exhibition aims to explore the Renaissance interior as a powerful site where cultural and aesthetic values were constructed and challenged.

A two-year research project jointly funded by the Getty Grant Program, the AHRB and the Victoria & Albert Museum will generate substantial new research by an interdisciplinary team of scholars. The research process will involve a series of symposia and seminars, culminating in a publication to accompany the exhibition. This will provide a permanent record of the project's findings. Both exhibition and book will present an entirely new way of looking at the 'Renaissance' through the development of domestic life and artefacts.

### Reference:

CONF: Novelty, Trade and Exchange in the Renaissance Interior. In: ArtHist.net, May 15, 2003 (accessed Jul 7, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/25648>>.