

## Criminal Intent (CAA Atlanta 2005)

David M.

Criminal Intent: Lawlessness and Artistic Genius

In an 1859 Gazette des Beaux Arts article celebrating the sincerity and piety of the anonymous French medieval sculptor, Viollet-le-Duc noted that modern artists deliberately pursued a criminal record to gain notoriety. An appearance in the police blotters, he lamented, led to fame. Viollet-le-Duc singled out Benvenuto Cellini as the culprit who popularized this method, but his criticism could apply equally well to Caravaggio or Salvator Rosa, artists-historiographically speaking-famous for glamorizing criminal behavior. How conscious was the "cultivation" of a criminal persona for these Early Modern pioneers? What models did they have? How did later artists model themselves on their example? How has lawlessness, both in deed and as an idea, become an accepted-even expected-characteristic of the Modern artist? When did the symmetry between breaking rules in art and the commission of criminal acts become a topos in art and art historiography? This discussion can be expanded to include other episodes of lawbreaking in an artistic context: libel, theft, forgery, graffiti, destruction or defacement of property, etc. The session will include papers from any period that address these important questions.

Deadline for proposal submissions, May 14, 2004. Please send cv and 1-2 page proposal to:

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Reference:

CFP: Criminal Intent (CAA Atlanta 2005). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 18, 2004 (accessed Mar 17, 2026),  
<<https://arthist.net/archive/26357>>.