

## Formulating a Response (Leiden, 20–22 Apr 06)

Formulating a Response:

Methods of Research on Italian and Northern European Art, 1400-1600

Date: April 20-22, 2006

Place: Leiden University, UR Zaal - Academiegebouw

Cost: EUR20 / EUR10 for students

Reservations:

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Reservations highly recommend, space is limited

Organizers: Joost Keizer and Todd Richardson

The aim of this conference is to examine recent methodologies in the study of art of the Northern Countries and that of Italy in the early modern period (15th - 16th centuries). Rather than focusing on the artistic exchange between Italy and the North, concentration will be on methodological differences in the historical approach to northern and southern Renaissance art. In so doing, we hope to (re-) integrate what has become a marked division in art-historical method. It is our contention that such a methodological integration will greatly enhance the quality of research in both fields.

We find our historical precedent in 1564, when the writer and artist Dominicus Lampsonius from Brugge wrote a letter to Giorgio Vasari thanking him for his *Vite*. In this letter, he explained that over the previous four years he had read the *Lives* multiple times and, in doing so, he had learned good Italian diction and also how to formulate a proper response to painting. Compared to the abundant literature in Italy addressing art discourse from the mid-15th century onward, such direct commentary on art reception in Northern Europe during the 16th century is sporadic at best. On the one hand, this correspondence between Lampsonius and Vasari signals the profound intellectual and artistic influence exchanged between northern and southern Europe. On the other hand, it indicates that the very idea of formulating a response to art was a crucial issue to Lampsonius and his northern contemporaries as much as it was to Vasari and his Italian colleagues.

In a similar vein, historians of late Medieval and early Modern Italian and northern European art adopt, develop, even trade methodological approaches.

Whether Erwin Panofsky's "hidden symbolism", Michael Baxandall's "period eye", or Ernst Gombrich's "beholder's share", it is evident that ways of talking about art do not have to be bound by region. Yet, in the last 30 years art history has become ever more specialized, the result of which is a profound methodological difference in the approaches to the art of Italy and that of the North. Thus, in the wake of Baxandall's study on the social history of pictorial style (1972), research on Italian art has focused on the role of the patron in artistic production, the visual frame of the (gendered) beholder, and the relation between visual art and forms of popular as well as learned culture, such as civic spectacle and court culture. Moreover, recent research in Italian art has considered the work of some artists as conscious responses to contemporary debates in art theory and cultural change, signaling a heightened historical and social consciousness in the work of Michelangelo for example. At the same time, scholars working on the early modern period in the North have concentrated more on the power of images in communicating religious meaning, the ex voto function of art, the formations of different genres, such as landscape and market scenes, within the artistic spectrum, and questions of 'realism' and the painterly construction of an alternative (religious) reality. Without denying the cultural differences between the countries on both sides of the Alps, the obvious dispersion in art historical approach is not justified by these differences. In fact, as the Lampsonius-Vasari correspondence indicates, much can be gleaned from an open dialogue between specialists working on art from different cultures. Whether in writing about art theory, landscape or patronage, an examination of methodological approaches to northern and Italian art reveals similarities and comparisons within visual perception, performance, reception, and interpretation. For example, in the last decade, scholars such as James Marrow, Rudolf Preimesberger, and Heike Schlie, have all argued for a conscious pictorial art discourse in the north which previous art historians had only recognized as occurring in Italy. The symposium, "Formulating a Response: Methods of Research on Italian and Northern European Art, 1400-1600," seeks to create a forum for further exchange.

Spread over two days in April 2006 and divided into four categories, the symposium will begin with one introductory speaker addressing the historiographical roots of the methodological differences. It will proceed with two keynote speakers, one focused on Italian modes of representation (Klaus Krüger) and the other in Netherlandish (Reindert Falkenburg). The core of the conference will be divided into four sessions, each session consisting of four speakers, two with Italian themes and two with Northern. The sessions are divided by subject matter:

#### 1. Visual Art Theory

The session will concentrate on the visual construction of art theory.

Whereas Italy boasted a reasonable corpus of art-theoretical writings in the early modern period, this literature occurs only sporadically in the North. The discrepancy has led to the belief that Italian art is based in a theoretical agenda while the art of the Northern countries was produced with little reflection on the theory and practice of painting. The papers under consideration will confront this notion by concentrating on the evidence offered by the objects themselves.

## 2. Representation of Nature / Nature of Representation

The session will be devoted to the meaning of landscape and genre in the early modern period. In the course of time, study of this genre has concentrated on such diverse themes as the representation and formation of 'reality', the representation of time, the religious meaning of landscapes, and the geographically bound factors which led to the emergence of the landscape and genre-piece. However, although it is usually considered as a typical Northern phenomenon, landscape painting enjoyed a notable popularity in Italy as well.

## 3. Patron and Portraiture

The representation of the patron (alone, in the company of family, represented in an altarpiece or chapel decoration, or in a devotional diptych) has since recently been the subject of studies in the identity-formation of the elite in early modern Europe. Touching on such issues as the religious self, the idealization of the sitter, the social identity of the patron and the way these portraits mediate the patron's relation to the wider world, the study of early modern portraiture has also come to clearly illustrate the different approaches of Northern and Italian art.

## 4. Collection and Display as the Formation of Public and Private Identity

Recent developments in a variety of historical disciplines, including art history, literary studies, history of religion and others, have begun to re-evaluate the concept of self and identity in the early-modern period. Rather than thinking of self to be a discrete, static entity, we now understand it to be formed and re-formed in a continual, dynamic process. Similarly, religious, social and personal identities were constituted through devotional practices, communal rituals and performances (e.g. liturgies, Joyous Entries, weddings, etc.). The built environment, the physical habitat - including church, studiolo, city, theater, Kunst and Wunderkammern, and market - was thus the locus for a set of social and cultural practices by which the construction of inner self and the performance of outer identity were inseparably and relationally bound to one another.

Our prediction is that by juxtaposing research on similar topics, but different geographical regions, insightful similarities and comparisons of methodology will emerge.

DAY 1 (Thursday, 20 April)

EVENING (15.30 - 19.00)

15.30 - 15.45: Welcome: Geert Booij (Dean, Faculty of Letters)

15.45 - 16.30: Keynote speaker 1: Reindert Falkenburg (Leiden University)

16.30 - 17.15: Keynote speaker 2: Klaus Krüger (Freie Universität Berlin)

17.15 - 18.00: Discussion: Jeroen Stumpel (Utrecht University)

18.00 - 19.00: Borrel

DAY 2 (Friday, 21 April)

MORNING (9.00 - 12.30)

Session One: "Visual Art Theory"

Moderator: Edward Grasman (Leiden University)

09.15 - 09.45: Jeroen Stumpel (Utrecht University)

"Recipes for Perspective - written and unwritten"

09.45 - 10.15: Bram de Klerck (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

"Gaudenzio Ferrari (ca. 1475-1546) and the Renaissance:

Vasari versus Lomazzo"

10.15 - 10.45: Discussion

10.45 - 11.00: Tea / coffee break

11.00 - 11.30: Joost Keizer (Leiden University)

"Michelangelo and the Art of Not Describing"

11.30 - 12.00: Bertram Kaschek (Technische Universität, Dresden)

"Fear and Loathing in Antwerp. Bruegel's Landscapes  
between Art Theory and Eschatology"

12.00 - 12.30: Discussion

AFTERNOON (14.00 - 17.30)

Session Two: "Representation of Nature / Nature of Representation"

Moderator: Bert Meijer (Dutch University Institute, Florence (IT) and  
Utrecht University)

14.15 - 14.45: Denis Ribouillaut (University of Paris I Sorbonne)

"Possessing a Landscape: Landscape Painting and Legitimation in Renaissance Italy"

14.45 - 15.15: Tanja Michalsky (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main)

"Nature into Space. On the Perception of Landscape in Netherlandish Painting and Art-Theory (16-17th century)"

15.15 - 15.45: Discussion

15.45 - 16.00: Coffee break

16.00 - 16.30: Todd Richardson (Leiden University)

"Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Painter of Nature or the Nature of Painters"

16.30 - 17.00: Dennis Geronimus (New York University)

"The Power of the Primal in Florentine Renaissance Landscape"

17.00 - 17.30: Discussion

DAY 3 (Saturday, 22 April)

MORNING (9.00 - 12.00)

Session Three: "Collection and Display as the Formation of Public and Private Identity"

Moderator: Arjan de Koomen (Amsterdam University)

09.15 - 09.45: Stephen Campbell (Johns Hopkins University)

"Representations of Collecting/ Collecting as Representation in Sixteenth Century Italy"

09.45 - 10.15: Mark Meadow (University of California, Santa Barbara)

"Putting Things in Boxes: Places of Knowledge from the Italian Studiolo to the German Wunderkammer"

10.15 - 10.45: Discussion

10.45 - 11.00: Tea / coffee break

11.00 - 11.30: Henk van Veen (Groningen University)

"Typology and Topicality: The Florentine Obsequies of Cosimo I de Medici (1574)"

11.30 - 12.00: Emily Peters (Rhode Island School of Design)

"Ideal and Actual Audiences for the fête book, La ioyevse & magnifique entrée de Monseigneur François de France"

(Antwerp, 1582)"

12.00 - 12.30: Discussion

AFTERNOON (14.00 - 17.30)

Session Four: "Patron and Portraiture"

Moderator: Bernard Aikema (University of Verona)

14.00 - 14.30: Hugo van der Velden (Harvard University)  
TBA

14.30 - 15.00: Bram Kempers (University of Amsterdam)  
"The 'pensieroso' in Raphael's School of Athens: The  
Identity, Date, Painter, Patron and Meaning of the Added  
Figure in the Centre"

15.00 - 15.30: Discussion

15.30 - 16.00: Coffee / tea break

16.00 - 16.30: Gert Jan van der Sman (Dutch University Institute,  
Florence)  
"5 x Giovanna Tornabuoni"

16.30 - 17.00: Jessica Buskirk (University of California, Berkeley)  
"Love, Beauty, and Memling's Portraits"

17.00 - 17.30: Discussion

Concluding remarks: Hugo van der Velden

Reference:

CONF: Formulating a Response (Leiden, 20-22 Apr 06). In: Arthist.net, Feb 14, 2006 (accessed Jul 10, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/28001>>.