

Portrayals of Love, Friendship, and Desire (RSA 2010 Venice)

Marianne Koos

Call for Papers

Renaissance Society of America Conference

8-10 April 2010

Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Isola San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

Panel Title:

Portrayals of Love, Friendship, and Desire in Italian Art around 1500

One of the most important yet enigmatic topics of Italian Renaissance art is the iconography of love. Numerous fundamental studies of the past decades have broadened our knowledge and perspective. However, many works of art still 'resist' convincing interpretation – especially in (ideal) portraiture or non narrative images in close-up. There is a clear need for further analysis on the symbols, metaphors, and metonymies of the literary love discourse – and its plurality of concepts – as reflected in visual images of love and friendship. What certainly deserves more detailed attention is how and why structures of devotional images intermingle with profane imagery (and vice versa). Another desideratum of central relevance are close-readings regarding the character of the emotions and gestures depicted in images, of the material structures, and of the rendering of surface qualities, which often initiate and reflect a relationship of desire between image and beholder. In addition, very little is known about the occasions related to the commissions of images of love and friendship, about their functions, their handling as well as hanging/positioning – aspects, which may change interpretations considerably.

This panel encourages papers offering new insights into the iconography of love, friendship and desire in Italian art from 1450-1530. We welcome contributions discussing (ideal) portraits and non narrative images in different visual media (painting, sculpture, relief, medals, graphic arts etc.) with reference to:

- open questions of iconography, including analysis not only of common symbols but also of metaphors and metonymies in Renaissance love poetry

and literature (Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, Petrarchan)

- the visual structures of images of love and friendship and related ambivalences between the devotional and the profane
- investigations of emotions depicted or omitted in images, considering their significance for the emotional and aesthetic impact on the beholder
- the use of colour and/or the rendering of material surface according to the depicted subject, provoking a relationship of desire between beholder and image (their particular 'aesthetics and ethics of effect')
- functions, occasions, and circumstances of commissions, including the question of images as gifts among friends and lovers, considering the heterosexual, homosexual and homosocial relations possibly involved

Scholars interested in a closer reflection and discussion of these topics are invited to send an abstract (150 words maximum) for a 20-minute paper, a short cv and contact information (current institutional affiliation, e-mail address) to the organizers before May 7, 2009.

Organizers:

Jeanette Kohl, History of Art Department, University of California,
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Marianne Koos, Department of Art History, University of Fribourg,
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Speakers must be members of the Renaissance Society of America at the time of the conference.

Please consult the RSA website for further informations:

<http://www.rsa.org>

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Reference:

CFP: Portrayals of Love, Friendship, and Desire (RSA 2010 Venice). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 11, 2009 (accessed Jan 18, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/31478>>.