

1 Session at HNA (Cambridge/London, 10–13 Jul 24)

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[1] Netherlandish Art in Renaissance Florence: Architectural Exchanges from North to South?

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This session intends to explore how the intense artistic, commercial, political and military interactions between Florence and the Low Countries have enriched Florence's architectural culture in the period 1400–1600. Our aim is not to argue for a notable Netherlandish influence on Florence's Renaissance buildings, but to study how the manifold exchanges with 'le Fiandre' have contributed to Florence's broad architectural culture in all its diversity.

It is well known that Tuscan merchant-bankers working in Bruges and Antwerp avidly collected Flemish paintings and luxury objects, but their interest in local, 'northern' manners of building and dwelling has thus far received little scholarly attention. Yet the numerous artworks that were imported from Flanders to Florence or produced in Florence by Flemish artisans played a significant role in adorning Florentine buildings. Moreover, some of these artworks connoted northern ways of dwelling or depicted an architecture that contrasted sharply with the all'antica style favoured in Florence. While the impact of Flemish painting on Florentine art is well-studied, the transfer of architectural images and ideas, building materials and techniques from Flanders to Florence remains a blind spot in recent scholarship on the internationalism of Renaissance Florence.

For this session, we are especially interested in exchanges that occurred at the intersection of architecture and the visual arts. The presence in Renaissance Florence of numerous Flemish canvases and panel paintings is well attested, but how were depictions in these admired paintings of a distinctly northern architecture received in Florence? Notable cases include Rogier van der Weyden's Lamentation of Christ (Galleria degli Uffizi) and Hans Memling's Scenes from the Passion of Christ (Galleria Sabauda), both displayed at the Villa Medici at Careggi, or Memling's Last Judgement triptych (Gdańsk), commissioned for the Tani chapel in the Badia Fiesolana. The work of Botticelli's collaborator, the 'Master of the Gothic Buildings', shows that images of northern landscapes, towns, buildings and interiors were appreciated in Florence, but at the same time Floren-

tine artists influenced by Flemish paintings sometimes converted their northern architectural setting to one in an all'antica style, as in Domenico Ghirlandaio's altarpiece in the Sassetti chapel. How did Florentine patrons and architects respond to painted northern architecture? How did such paintings relate to the architecture and decoration of the spaces in which they were displayed? Were such examples of Netherlandish *architectura picta* seen as generic or did they connote existing buildings? Did they carry certain cultural, political, religious connotations? Did the different aesthetic principles they express – e.g. verticality, lightness, formal (gothic) vocabulary – exert any influence on painted architecture in Florentine art, or on Florentine architecture?

We are likewise interested in the decoration of Florentine residences with painted cityscapes and battle scenes from the Low Countries. Examples include the series of twenty frescos at the Villa Arrivabene, or the set of seventeen battle paintings commissioned in Flanders in 1602 (now lost) that once decorated the Villa Medici in Artimino, where they formed a martial counterpart to Justus Utens's series of Medici villa paintings.

Papers may also focus on the architectural projects of Flemish/Dutch painters, sculptors, glaziers or glass painters working in Florence; notable artists whose involvement in architectural commissions requires further study include Giambologna and his assistant Pierre de Francqueville, Hendrick van den Broeck, Gualtieri d'Anversa, Jan van der Straet and the enigmatic Johannes Stolf.

Please send an abstract of max. 500 words and a one-page CV to caterina.cardamone@vub.be by 29 September 2023. All speakers are expected to be members of HNA by the time of the conference.

Reference:

CFP: 1 Session at HNA (Cambridge/London, 10-13 Jul 24). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 10, 2023 (accessed Jul 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/40022>>.