

Gernsheim Study Days: Mettere mano (Rome, 4–7 Mar 25)

Rome, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max Planck Institute for Art History, Mar 4–07, 2025

Deadline: Nov 10, 2024

Linnéa Kluge

Mettere mano. Reworking Early Modern Drawings – Gernsheim Study Days.

“... con questo, che Taddeo potesse correggere e mettere mano nei disegni e cartoni di Federigo a suo piacimento ...”

In the *Vita* of Taddeo Zuccari, Giorgio Vasari describes the reworking of drawings – in contrast to that of paintings – as a common and spontaneous practice in the sixteenth century. In his *Libro de' disegni*, Vasari himself reworked his own drawing collection into elaborate framing collages organized by artist and subject. Some of these sheets were later further retouched, altered, and annotated by collectors and early restorers. Artists have also long interfered with drawings in their original state, with Peter Paul Rubens being but one prominent example.

The 2025 Gernsheim Study Days are dedicated to all aspects of reworking, retouching, and repairing early modern European drawings, engaging with both artistic and material issues.

Few other media are as easily and as quickly altered as paper: folding, pasting, trimming, and bleaching require readily accessible tools and minimal expertise in their handling. Reworking by another hand – highlighting, retracing, adding or erasing marks – as well as archival and curatorial practices – mounting and re-mounting, inscribing, stamping, and annotating – can alter the drawing's appearance, reception, attribution, and market value. Equally important is the slow material change of paper or ink over time, triggered by the most common environmental conditions. Being uniquely vulnerable, drawings are a productive starting point for thinking about the ways in which the material turn might be brought to bear on an object's material afterlife, and beyond the artist's initial conception and expression. This conference invites scholars, curators, and conservators to think critically about early modern practices of material interaction and manipulation as they applied to drawings.

We are interested in contributions that consider the role of artists, collectors, and early restorers in these processes – their intentions, means, successes and failures. Was the reworking of drawings a purely artistic matter, or did historical, social, and political factors make alterations more desirable, or even necessary? How did later additions and annotations attempt to adopt a “style,” and where might we situate the difference between correction and adaptation? How does the condition and function of a drawing favor its reworking? On the other hand, we are equally interested in contributions that examine the role that these alterations play in sustaining the objects over

time, both materially and figuratively, and the temporal commitment they betray; undermine traditional dichotomies between innovation and maintenance, considering these practices sites of knowledge production; explore how these acts might work alongside or against environmental factors and physical decay; and assess issues of skill and collective authorship, as well as the originality, visibility, and accountability of repairing and retouching techniques.

The Gernsheim Study Days are connected to “Rework” (2024/25), the Annual Research Initiative of the BHMPi Lise Meitner Group Decay, Loss, and Conservation in Art History; the Getty Paper Project “Touched/Retouched: Paper across Time, 1400–1800,” a collaboration with the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica; and the forthcoming Research Exhibition “Rework, Retouch, Care: Case Studies from the Hertziana Collection” (March 2025).

Concept and Scientific Organization:

Tatjana Bartsch, Francesca Borgo, Johannes Röhl

Application:

Please upload the following as PDF documents by November 10, 2024 on our recruitment platform: <https://recruitment.biblhertz.it>

title and a 300-word abstract of the proposed paper

brief CV (max 2 pages, including current position and affiliation)

Conference languages are English, German, and Italian. The Bibliotheca Hertziana will organize and pay for accommodation and reimburse travel costs (economy class) in accordance with the provisions of the German Travel Expenses Act (Bundesreisekostengesetz).

Reference:

CFP: Gernsheim Study Days: Mettere mano (Rome, 4-7 Mar 25). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 28, 2024 (accessed Dec 29, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42773>>.