

Hidden in Plain Sight (Florence, 17–19 Jan 25)

Netherlands Interuniversity Institute for Art History in Florence, Viale Torricelli 5, Jan 17–19, 2025

Netherlands Interuniversity Institute for Art History in Florence, Netherlands
Interuniversity Institute for Art History in Florence (NIKI)

"Hidden in Plain Sight: Black African Lives and Visual Histories in the Early Modern World".

How do representations of marginalized bodies challenge dominant narratives in history? What new realities are revealed about the absence and agency of Black Africans by a more global approach to the 14–17th centuries? The international conference Hidden in Plain Sight, co-hosted by the NIKI and NYU-Florence, will explore a range of interrelated themes, drawing from art history, anthropology, African studies, history, musicology, and other fields. By critically re-examining histories of colonialism and slavery, the event seeks to reshape our understanding of disciplinary boundaries and spark new scholarly debates.

Friday, 17 January

9:30

Coffee/Tea

10:00

Michael W. Kwakkelstein (NIKI/Utrecht University)

Director's Welcome

10:15

Dennis Geronimus (New York University)

Introduction to the Conference

Session I

(Chair: Michael W. Kwakkelstein)

10:30

Denva Gallant (Rice University)

"Blackness, Black Africans and Giotto's 'Mocking of Christ'"

11:00

Paul Kaplan (Purchase College State University of New York)

"The Black Magi Enter Florence"

11:30

Vera-Simone Schulz (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz)

"A King, a Giraffe, and a Land Full of Riches across the Sea: Florence and its Afro-Eurasian Entanglements, Connectivity, and Resistance"

12:00

Discussion

12:30

Lunch

Session II

(Chair: Hannah Bader, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz)

13:45

Kate Lowe (Queen Mary, University of London) and Lorenz Böninger (Independent scholar, Florence)

“Living in Plain Sight: People of African Ancestry in Fifteenth-century Florentine Documents”

14:15

G rard Chouin (William & Mary University)

“The Atlantic Frontier and the Processes of Enslavement in 15th- and 16th-century West Africa: Perspectives from the African Looking-Glass”

14:45

Carlo Taviani (Universit  degli Studi di Teramo)

“Black African Enslaved People and Italian Merchants in the Maghreb and the Mid-Atlantic (1450–1530)”

15:15

Discussion

15:30

Coffee/Tea

Session III

(Chair: Justin Randolph Thompson, Co-Founder and Director of Black History Month Florence)

16:00

Erin Rowe (Johns Hopkins University)

“Locating Ethiopia in Early Modern Sacred History and Art”

16:30

Sarah M. Gu rin (University of Pennsylvania)

“In auro de Paleola: West Africa Hidden in the Archives, Excavating a Term”

17:00

Scott Nethersole (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

“Bartolomeu Dias’s Padr o at Kwaaihoek in 1488, the AmaXhosa in 1786, and the Problem of Evidence”

17:30

Discussion

17:45

Reception

Saturday, 18 January

9:30

Coffee/Tea

Session IV

Chair: Gert Jan van der Sman (NIKI)

10:00

Marisa J. Fuentes (Rutgers University)

“Critical Fabulation Misunderstood: What is Method in the Archives of Slavery?”

10:30

Dennis Geronimus (New York University)

"The Black Duke's Daughter: Absence and Presence in a Pontormo Portrait"

11:00

Ana Howie (Cornell University)

"Fashioning Difference: Dress, Race, and Gender in Early Modern Genoa"

12:00

Discussion

12:30

Lunch

Session V

(Chair: Jonathan Nelson, University of Syracuse-Florence)

13:45

Cécile Fromont (Harvard University)

"Kongo, Brazil, and Colonies at the Villa Medici in Rome"

14:15

Janie Cole (University of Connecticut)

"Musical Spectacle, Imagery, and Afro-European Diplomacy: Kongo in the 1640s Dutch World"

14:45

John Thornton (Boston University)

"The Role of the Kingdom of Kongo in African American Christianity"

15:15

Discussion

15:30

Coffee/Tea

Session VI

(Chair: Dennis Geronimus, New York University)

16:00

Alisa LaGamma (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

"Manifestations of African Perspectives 1400–1600"

16:30

Carmen Fracchia (Emerita, Birkbeck, University of London)

"Juan de Pareja and New Spain"

17:00

Arianna Ray (Northwestern University)

"Brasilia Qua Parte Paret Belgis: Paper, Power, and Blackness Between Brazil and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century"

17:30

Discussion

Sunday, January 19

Location: NYU-Florence, Villa La Pietra, Via Bolognese, 120

10:00

Screening of Daphne Di Cinto's short film *Il Moro* (2021), followed by a discussion

Reference:

CONF: Hidden in Plain Sight (Florence, 17-19 Jan 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 15, 2025 (accessed Apr 4, 2026),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/43712>>.