

Hirsute, Downy, Hairless (Florence/online, 24–25 Oct 25)

Nederlands Interuniversitair Kunsthistorisch Instituut (NIKI), Viale Torricelli 5,
Florence, Italy, Oct 24–25, 2025

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

Hirsute, Downy, Hairless. Meanings and Forms of Body Hair in Early Modern Visual Culture.

While long overlooked in art historical studies, over the past two decades body hair has emerged as a significant field of research offering new perspectives on Early Modern visual culture. This workshop brings together scholars from various disciplines to facilitate comparative analyses of visual traditions and discuss the representation of body hair in different genres and regions, ranging from Western Europe to South Asia. By foregrounding the seemingly marginal yet culturally charged representation of body hair, this workshop contributes to a more differentiated understanding of the representation of the human body within Early Modern discourse.

For online registration and further information please visit <https://www.niki-florence.org/in-person-online-conference-hirsute-downy-hairless-meanings-and-forms-of-body-hair-in-early-modern-visual-culture/?lang=en>

Conference Programme

Friday, October 24

10:00 Coffee/Tea

10:30

Michael W. Kwakkelstein (NIKI) – Director's Welcome

Mathilda Blanquet (Université de Toulouse / Universität der Künste, Berlin) and Mandy Richter (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut) – Introduction to the Conference

Session I – Norms and Beyond: Different Notions of Body Hair

Chair: Katharine Stahlbuhk (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut)

11:00 Natasha Seaman (Rhode Island College) – Male Body Hair as a Disruption of the Classical in Early Modern Art

11:35 Amelia Pontifex (University of Melbourne) – Bearded Warnings: Moralising the Hirsute Female Body in Early Modern Art

12:10 Elisa Stafferini (The Warburg Institute / University of London) – Hair, Wilderness and Gender: Virgil's Camilla in Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*

12:45 Lunch

Session II – Hairy/Furry

Chair: Sinem Casale (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut)

15:00 Ruth Sargent Noyes (Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn) – Saints, Furs, and Slaves: Body Hair and Its Animal Avatars between the Courts of Seventeenth-Century Muscovy, Lithuania, and Tuscany

15:35 Lisa Hecht (Philipps-Universität Marburg) – The “Hairy Maid” from Augsburg – Barbara Van Beck Between Femininity and Freakery

16:10 Break

Session III – Of Beards and Bearded Grapes

Chair: Dominique Brancher (Yale University / I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies)

16:30 Patricia Simons (University of Michigan / University of Melbourne) – The Sixteenth-Century Return to Beards: Medical Factors

17:05 Carina Greven (Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap / Rijksmuseum Amsterdam) – “His Beard Was His Business”: The Painting of 1583 of Pieter Dircksz (1528–1606), Nicknamed “Long-beard”

17:40 Julia Saviello (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt) – Bearded Grapes

18:15 Discussion

18:30 End of Day

Saturday, October 25

09:30 Coffee/Tea

Session IV – Body Hair in Religious Representations

Chair: Tommaso Mozzati (Università di Perugia)

10:00 Itay Sapir (Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)) – Ribera’s Hairoticism: Hair, Skin and Masculinity in a Late Saint Sebastian

10:35 Tereza Horáková (Masaryk University, Brno) – Between Illusion and Reality: The Use of Human Hair in Baroque Sculptures of the Italian Sacri Monti

11:10 Final Discussion

Followed by an in-depth study of the topic in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello (for invited speakers only).

Reference:

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