

Renaissance Portrait Drawings (New York, 27–29 Mar 14)

New York, Mar 27–29, 2014

Deadline: May 31, 2013

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Renaissance Portrait Drawings – Italy and the North, 1400–1550

During recent years, the genre of the Renaissance portrait has received growing attention. Painted and sculpted portraits have been given greatest consideration, while portrait drawings have been more marginally treated.

During the Quattrocento in Italy and northern Europe artists explored different media and techniques to draw their sitters' or their own likenesses: metalpoint, brush, pen and ink, as well as charcoal/black chalk and red chalk were used. Techniques were developed and exchanged between artists from different environments, as was the case with brush drawings, initially typical for Venice and eventually diffused throughout much of Europe.

Drawn portraits were executed as preparatory studies to be translated into other media, but in some cases there is evidence that they were also regarded as autonomous works of art: in a letter of 1477, Andrea Mantegna asks Ludovico Gonzaga whether the portraits he had commissioned were to be painted or rather drawn, since haste was required: »[...] chome volendo far quelli ritrati, non intendo, volendolj la S. vostra si presto, in che modo habia a fare, o solamente disegna[ti] o coloriti in tavola o in tela [...]«.

Portrait drawings were a much desired subject for collectors, and were also collected by the artists themselves, as the inscription on the earliest self-portrait drawing of Albrecht Dürer reveals: »Dz hab Ich aus eim spigell nach mir selbs kunterfet im 1484 Jor, do ich noch ein Kint was« (»In this I portrayed myself from a mirror in 1484 when I still was a child«).

This RSA panel invites papers that examine any aspect of portrait drawings during the Renaissance period (1400–1550) in Europe. Topics may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Written sources regarding technical approach and sitters' specifications;
- Theory;
- Drawing techniques;
- Inscriptions;
- Underdrawings;

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- Function (e.g. preparatory, autonomous, as tools of transfer to other media);
- Display of portrait drawings;
- Collecting of portrait drawings;

A round table discussion is planned to conclude the panel.

Please send a paper title, an abstract (150-word maximum) and a brief CV (300-word maximum) to zgraja@biblhertz.it and claudia.lehmann@ikg.unibe.ch by Friday, May 31.

Reference:

CFP: Renaissance Portrait Drawings (New York, 27-29 Mar 14). In: ArtHist.net, May 18, 2013 (accessed Jun 9, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/5377>>.