

Stillness in Early Modern Italian Art (RSA, New York, 27–29 Mar 14)

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Stillness in Early Modern Italian Art

Session Sponsored by the Italian Art Society

Keeping pace with our digital, mobile, and globally conscious reality, in recent years art historians have recast the discipline through ideas of performance, time, geography, and exchange. Movement, it would seem, is the paradigm of our age. Movement was, of course, also of interest to early modern Italian art theorists, who sought the adept depiction of the affetti and praised paintings in which the figures seem to move and breathe. Yet, the focus on movement belies an inherent limitation of the painted image: its stillness. Stillness is more than an objective fact in the history of Italian painting; it is also an important theoretical and critical construct. Stillness is a defining quality in the continuum between icon and narrative and in the formulation of devotional art such as the *sacra conversazione*, it is a precondition of single point perspective, and it is an element of decorum, as seen in later sixteenth-century condemnation of the *figura serpentinata*. Art, according to Wincklemann, “can express her own peculiar nature only in stillness.” In our current age of mobility, is it possible to reflect on the significance of stillness? This panel seeks papers that examine any aspect of stillness in early modern Italian art: as a problem in the depiction of narrative (as in Caravaggio's stories 'without action'), an issue of categorization (ie. 'classical' vs. 'baroque'), a defining quality of devotional art and spiritual experience, a stylistic trait (eg. Guido Reni), the setting for aesthetic response, a condition of perspectival constructions of space and fictional architecture, a corollary of silence and part of the debate of painting versus poetry, or as a trope of sleep or death. The goal is to theorize stillness as the necessary counterpart to movement, and as a critical component of the aesthetic and devotional function of early modern Italian art.

Please send a paper title; abstract (150-word maximum); keywords; and a brief curriculum vitae (300-word maximum, not a prose biography) to: karen.lloyd@queensu.ca by Monday, May 27, 2013.

Reference:

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