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Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Flavia Barbarini, Temple University

“The Primacy of *Disegno* and the Commodification of Drawings in 16th-Century Italy”

The correspondence of the Florentine collector and Medici art advisor Niccolò Gaddi (1537–1591) illuminates how drawings circulated in mid-16th-century Italy—through agents, booksellers, publishers, and antiquarians—and reveals a progressive commodification of the medium. The codification of ideas around *disegno*, popularized by Giorgio Vasari, sparked a large demand for drawings, which began to be appreciated on their own terms and collected more widely as a result. This caused changes in their circulation, leading to the development of a market for the medium. Most previous studies have traced these market dynamics back to the mid-17th century; however, this paper will demonstrate that the phenomenon started almost a century earlier and well before a market of paintings. Although drawings continued to be exchanged and donated among collectors and artists, new and more complex ways of marketing drawings propelled the creation of a secondary market, with drawings circulating through third parties and assuming monetary value. The essential nature of the antiquarian market created a parallel model for the secondary market of drawings, with sheets traded and exchanged among various collections. Evidence, such as the practice of the Bolognese antiquarian Ercole Basso (1524–1587), who used *periti*—experts—and artists to guarantee the quality of drawings in relation to their monetary value, reinforces the notion of an increasing commodification of drawings already in the late 16th century.

Zoe Copeman, University of Maryland

“*Mis*-Understanding the Anatomy of the Part: How One Image Rewrote the Mastectomy Procedure”

Before his death in 1645, the German physician-surgeon Johannes Scultetus authored a textbook to teach his fellow medical practitioners how to select proper tools for manual operations. Rather than faithfully visualizing his practices, however, Scultetus inserted figures representing the common “mistakes” made by his peers, thus training his readers in semeiology (i.e., the interpretation of bodily signs). Following the Aristotelian-Galenic model, which emphasized restoring patient constitutions rather than treating diseases, Scultetus’s textbook offered a framework for interpreting individual case studies. The work was not singular. Andreas Vesalius had similarly marshaled images of incorrect anatomy within his esteemed *Fabrica* (1543) to expose the faults of past scholarship. These “humanist surgeons” drew upon Aristotelian

philosophy and Latinate rhetoric to create illustrations that, they envisioned, encouraged genuine learning rather than rote memorization. Scultetus's figure of a breast amputation was one such didactic image illustrating why a popular technique for extirpating tumors from the breast was a "barbaric" practice, inconducive to "the anatomy of the part" and, thus, ill-advised for most breast cancer operations. The problem was that Scultetus had little to no control over how his work was received. His folio Latinate text was distributed to classes of surgeons without the knowledge and access required to read his pictorial program fully and "correctly." For nearly half a century, many surgeons would, in fact, employ the very technique that Scultetus admonished in the name of the image that he had designed to warn against it. This presentation traces the reception of Scultetus's mastectomy figure in England, analyzing how a single "icon" could influence an entire generation of English surgeons to practice a procedure "incorrectly."

Ryan Foley, George Washington University

"Longing for the *Ghulāmān-e Farangī*: European Youths in 17th-Century Safavid Painting"

Active during the later Safavid period, the famed Iranian painter Rezā 'Abbāsī (c.1565–1635) is most well-known for his single-sheet paintings, collected by and circulated between private patrons. Among the diverse subjects of his paintings, Reza depicted youths garbed in European clothing, often accompanied by lapdogs or other indicators of "foreign" identity. Such paintings, including *Youth in European Clothing*, have been neutered in past art-historical interpretations. Hesitant to engage with issues of desire, exoticism, and sexuality, prior scholarship has avoided the erotic undertones of these figures. At once tied to broader traditions situating beautiful youths as objects of desire and aids in spiritual practice, interpretations of these works have nonetheless emphasized abstract spiritual metaphors at the expense of the sensuous.

Placing Rezā's *Youth in European Clothing* in conversation with contemporary European and Safavid art and poetry, this paper seeks to recentralize the figure of the European-garbed youth within 17th-century Safavid painting as a locus of desire. Associated with poetic language, such youths evoked the prototypical Iranian beloved, painstakingly close and intriguing in their subversiveness, yet ultimately inaccessible—qualities made ever more poignant by their "foreignness." The image of the European-garbed youth, in its ties to painterly traditions, capitalization on exoticizing curiosity, and engagement with urban observations, provided ample potentiality as a possessable representation of desire for the Safavid collector.

Chase Helein, American University

"Cupid's Palace: Giulio Romano's Sala di Psiche Frescoes and the Palazzo Te as Courtly Sensorium"

This paper analyzes the role of the senses in Giulio Romano's inventive Cupid and Psiche frescoes, painted in the Palazzo Te dining room for Duke Federico Gonzaga in 1526–1528. The fresco program has been interpreted using a Neoplatonic lens by scholars including Frederick Hartt. In the early modern period, Neoplatonic humanists such as Marsilio Ficino promoted a conventional hierarchy of the senses, wherein the five senses were ordered according to their relative virtue, with sight placed at the top. Mario Equicola, an eminent humanist at the Gonzaga court, offered an alternative to that well-known model, questioning the primacy of sight and rejecting the idea of a moralized, sensorial hierarchy altogether. This talk considers two scenes within the Sala di Psiche program, *Psiche Transgresses the Prohibition* and *Cupid Wakes Psiche with His Arrow*, arguing that they engage with Equicola's more complex model of the senses—thereby representing a marked departure from previous iterations of the same subject. Moments of touch drive the positive forces of the narrative, culminating in Cupid's final rescue of Psiche.

Sight, meanwhile, regularly acts as a negative force, leading to Psiche's misfortunes and Cupid's injury. These sensual episodes are depicted in a novel manner in the Palazzo Te frescoes to reinforce this key theme, while contributing to the experience of the dining room space as a multidimensional sensorium.

Christine Kim Korkmaz, Johns Hopkins University

"A Victory in Silver: Architectural Representation and Imperial Symbolism Under Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909)"

The Zafer Anıtı, or Victory Monument, was designed by imperial architect Raimondo D'Aronco to commemorate the Ottoman victory over the Greeks in 1897—a rare military success during a period otherwise defined by territorial losses and decline. Though never realized in built form, the monument survives through a series of drawings and a lavish silver model, gifted to Sultan Abdülhamid II by a Bulgarian delegation in 1900. Produced in a Berlin workshop and funded by Muslims across Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, the object was one of several architectural models gifted to the sultan for his silver jubilee—the 25th anniversary of his enthronement—but the only to memorialize a structure never constructed. The singular existence within the Ottoman Empire of both the unrealized building and the silver model underscores the visual and artistic transformations of the Hamidian Era, as well as the ways in which the sultan worked to craft his imperial image. This study examines both the architectural developments behind the Zafer Anıtı's conceptualization and how architecture was reimagined and re-presented through various visual forms at the turn of the 20th century. I argue that the monument, model, and building-as-referent functioned as instruments in the sultan's broader efforts, successful or otherwise, to legitimize his sovereignty and shape historical memory. By investigating architectural manifestations within the political and cultural context of Abdülhamid II's reign, this study sheds light on the larger strategies of imperial symbolism and the ways in which material culture intersected with late Ottoman political ideologies and diplomatic ambitions.

Elnaz Latifpour, University of Virginia

"Exceptions and Expectations: Pictorial Carpets and the Question of Authenticity in Southern Iranian Weaving"

This paper draws on my firsthand study of roughly 80 southern Iranian weavings—predominantly Qashqai (confederated nomadic groups in southwestern Iran)—across North American museum collections, dating from approximately 1850 to 1950. Among these objects, two pictorial carpets in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, known as the "Virgin Mary" and "Ahmed Shah" carpets, are exceptions. Never before studied or contextualized within the larger corpus, these works diverge from common types primarily in their iconography. Their centralized composition and imagery contrast sharply with the abstract geometry characteristic of most Qashqai production.

By analyzing these two examples alongside others from my corpus, this paper examines how such departures from "typical" weaving practice may reflect special commissions, external market demands, or individual experimentations. Situating these carpets within the shifting social and economic conditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I use them to pose larger questions about authenticity, adaptation, and the porous boundary between local tradition and commercial exchange. Ultimately, the "Virgin Mary" and "Ahmed Shah" carpets challenge fixed definitions of tribal art and help us understand the forces that shaped the weaving cultures of southern Iran.

Emily Shoyer, Bryn Mawr College

“Isabel Katjavivi’s *They Tried to Bury Us* (2018) and the Environmental Impacts of German Colonialism in Namibia”

This paper explores *They Tried to Bury Us* (2018) by Namibian artist Isabel Katjavivi, a multicomponent installation featuring sand, desert plants, and clay faces modeled after the artist’s visage, alongside photographs of the Omaheke region in northeastern Namibia. I investigate how Katjavivi aims her lens on a specific camel thorn tree to reveal how her Ovaherero ancestors were traumatized during the 1904–1908 German colonial genocide. Called Ngauzepo in Otjiherero, this tree was weaponized by German forces to hang Ovaherero people, and it has been preserved through oral histories as a local site of memory in the town of Otjinene. By showing extreme, closeup images of Ngauzepo’s dehydrated bark alongside desert materials in her Windhoek installation, Katjavivi invites her viewers to consider the tree’s mortality and, therefore, the multispecies impacts of this genocide. My interpretive work draws on Forensic Architecture’s *Restituting Evidence: Genocide and Reparations in German Colonial Namibia* (2022) as well as research by botanists Klaudia Schachtschneider and Edmund C. February on the mortality of camel thorns competing for water with invasive *Prosopis* species, which were introduced by German botanists in the 1900s. Ultimately I argue that Katjavivi’s work visualizes the wide ecological entanglements of the 1904–1908 genocide, shaping how trauma and memorialization can be understood beyond the human.

Weixin Zhou, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Rebuilding the City, Building Alternatives: Ideals, Tensions, and Politics in André Lurçat’s Reconstruction of Maubeuge”

At the end of 1944, Raoul Dautry (1880–1951), who led the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urban Planning (MRU), appointed André Lurçat (1894–1970) as the chief architect for the reconstruction of Maubeuge. Situated in northern France, Maubeuge was bombed and largely destroyed in 1940. Lurçat, as a Communist, believed in transferring power to the people and he incorporated a long process of public consultation in rebuilding Maubeuge. Another important component of Lurçat’s participative approach was his careful consideration of and engagement with the local environment, terrain, and history, enabling them to “take part” in the reconstruction and express themselves through architecture.

In this paper, I examine Lurçat’s reconstruction project in Maubeuge, focusing on public buildings, and engage his work in a broader discussion of the underlying tensions in the architectural and political culture of post–World War II France. Lurçat’s work in Maubeuge presented a tendency to decentralize MRU’s leadership and, by extension, a potential opposing force to the French political system after the exclusion of the French Communist Party (PCF) from the government in 1947. Lurçat’s approach thus suggested an alternative to MRU’s technocratic mandates that prioritized function and efficiency with minimal reference to local history and culture. His architecture, as a built and discursive space, aimed to retain the presence and understated power of the PCF by incorporating motifs, structures, and discourses from the past.