

Institute at Palazzo Rucellai
AAH 430: Special Topics: Gender Issues in Renaissance Art

Credits: 3
Instructor: Bette Talvacchia, Ph.D.
Schedule: TBA
Prerequisite: TBA
Museum entrance fees: TBA

Course Description:

This course will draw upon the art produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to study questions relating to the construction and representation of gender in visual culture. It will focus primarily on the art and artists represented in the Florentine collections. Issues to be covered will also deal with the commissioning of art by male and female patrons, weighing the differences and similarities in their patterns of patronage.

The functioning of symbolic systems will also be addressed, from the point of view of gender differentiation. For example, the development of mythologies around heroes and heroines will be explored, and their relation to the values privileged by contemporary society will be considered, as will the construction of male and female attributes in portraiture. Analogously, hagiographical systems within the religious institutions of the time controlling the representation of female and male saints will be studied. Emphasis will be placed on highly gendered characterizations of particular saints such as Mary Magdalene and Sebastian.

A significant section of the course material will focus on the symbolic and allegorical uses of the body in the art of this period. Religious images will be explored for their employment of the human figure as a vehicle for doctrine, reifying abstract concepts such as the Incarnation and Immaculate Conception. Theoretical discourse that has been developed to address the function of the nude figure in Renaissance visual systems will be introduced in this section of the course, treating such critical concepts as the gendered gaze, the erotic vs. the obscene.

Classroom instruction and discussion will alternate with the study of paintings and sculpture contained in the museums and monuments of Florence.

Course descriptions may be subject to occasional minor modifications at the discretion of the instructor.

Textbooks: TBA

During orientation at the Institute, students will receive a list of textbooks they are required to purchase. Students should not purchase any texts before orientation.