

## Renaissance Care I

Chair: Francesca Borgo

**Mar 11, 2023, 02:30 PM - 04:00 PM** (Atlantic Time)

Caribe Hilton - Conference Room 6 - Conference Center 2nd Floor

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**Federica Testa (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max Planck Institut)**

*Detaching and Transporting Wall Paintings in the 16th and 17th centuries*

The eighteenth century saw a rise in the practice of detaching and transporting wall paintings, led by what were considered at the time new and experimental detachment techniques. These reached their peak in the nineteenth century in response to an increasingly ambitious collecting market. But these techniques were not, in fact, all that novel. Authors from antiquity such as Pliny and Vitruvius, among others, refer to examples of frescoes transported using a method known today as stacco a massello. Abandoned for centuries, this practice found favour again in sixteenth-century Italy as a way of caring for (and saving) works that would otherwise be lost. This paper examines sixteenth-century stacchi focusing on a series of case studies. It argues that their detachment was not always guided by strictly conservational concerns, but rather prompted by devotional interests that aligned with Counter-Reformation dictates around sacred furnishings.

**Chiara Capulli (University of Cambridge and Bibliotheca Hertziana)**

*The Politics of Stones: Reinstating a Religious Community in Florence after the 1529 Guasto*

In 1529, as the Imperial army approached Florence, the church of San Donato a Scopeto, home to the Regular Canons of Saint Augustine, was torn down by the Republic so as not allow the besiegers any shelter outside the city. Fifty years after the Guasto, the Canons unearthed what remained of the old Romanesque façade to decorate their new home, the church of San Iacopo Sopr'Arno in central Florence. A number of inscriptions account for the salvaging and reinstatement of the stones, but no scholarly attention has been given to the reasons for such an endeavour. By analysing an unpublished poem celebrating the stones' transfer and examining the recently uncovered site of San Donato, this paper discusses the ways in which the Canons cared for their material heritage. It argues that they understood the reinstatement of the displaced community as a symbolic and political, rather than practical, act.

**Ronah Sadan (Aarhus University)**

*Whitewash and Wall Paintings in Early Modern Europe and Beyond*

This paper explores the whitewashing of church interiors throughout Europe in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the multilayered impact it had on the survival of medieval and Renaissance wall paintings. Dubbed "the age of Whitewash" by nineteenth-century antiquarians, the long eighteenth-century made liberal use of lime-based wash to sanitize decrepit walls and create unified liturgical spaces. This prepared the ground for a frisson of rediscovery in the nineteenth century: entombed wall paintings were paradoxically preserved by the destructive act of whitewashing. At its most thrilling, the palimpsestic quality of whitewash allowed paintings to reclaim their places in churches as semi-miraculous apparitions; in other cases, it caused them to

vanish without a trace. The main case studies for this paper are drawn from Denmark, where, though largely unexamined in scholarly literature, whitewashing played a pivotal role in shaping a significant part of the country's painterly heritage.

## Renaissance Care II

Chair: Lisa Pon (University of Southern California)

**Mar 11, 2023, 04:30 PM - 06:00 PM** (Atlantic Time)

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Contact: [john.rattray@biblhertz.it](mailto:john.rattray@biblhertz.it)

**Vendula Hoppe (University of Manchester)**

*Caring for Velvets in the Renaissance*

This paper explores the ways in which Europeans cared for items made of velvet during the Renaissance. Velvet is a precious silk textile characterized by tufts and loops that rise above its surface, transforming the fabric into a soft, shiny, and iridescent material. Endowed with symbolic meanings of status, power, and wealth, velvets were used in both secular and sacred contexts throughout the Renaissance. From thin belts to lustrous gowns, velvet was a widely used material which, however, required specialised treatment. I examine practices of looking after velvets, paying particular attention to the ways in which people negotiated its delicacy. Spot cleaning, re-dyeing, and re-plumping of the pile were methods used to safeguard the fabric's characteristics. Such care also involved continuous remaking and recycling of the textile to create new garments or objects. This paper thus considers the people, skills, and practices involved in caring for this quintessential Renaissance material.

**Bruno Carabellese (Università degli Studi di Firenze)**

*Restoring Raphael: consequences of the renovation of the Chigi chapel in Santa Maria della Pace*

The restoration of the Chigi chapel in Santa Maria della Pace, commissioned by Fabio Chigi – the future Pope Alexander VII – in 1628-29, had considerable consequences on both the client's career and that of the artist who most actively took part in it, Pietro da Cortona. The discovery that, whilst the restoration campaign was ongoing, Pietro da Cortona painted new frescoes in the chapel that stood in direct comparison with Raphael's, leads us to ask how much this undertaking influenced his career. Using new documentary evidence from the Vatican Apostolic Library and stylistic analysis, this paper argues that it was the artist's caring for Raphael's works and the completion of the master's cycle that earned him the reputation of "new Raphael". Meanwhile, the restoration and completion of the chapel established Chigi as a skilled connoisseur within the cultured Roman circles.

**Grace Harpster (Georgia State University)**

*Old Images in a New Rome: Mosaic Maintenance in the Late Sixteenth Century*

The Catholic Church oversaw many new building projects after the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563, a clear articulation of Rome's triumphant renewal. Church leaders' actions regarding the old

things in extant churches, such as the city's many medieval mosaics, have been more difficult to interpret. Popes and cardinals often destroyed older mosaics—Cardinal Carlo Borromeo infamously ruined part of the ninth-century mosaics at Santa Prassede to install cabinets. Yet just as often, they carefully preserved mosaic decoration, seeing its historical value. This contradiction between destruction and preservation can be reconciled by taking a cue from the humdrum concerns of the custodian responsible for cleaning, fixing, and storing images in the church interior. This paper will look at Catholic reformers' attitudes towards mosaics through the more holistic category of maintenance, a deceptively humble category that has the power to reveal the importance of material decorum in late-sixteenth-century Rome.