

Problems in Fifteenth-Century Italian Painting and Sculpture, Tues., 1-3:40

Sarah Blake McHam

This seminar will reconsider the contributions of the artists usually considered to be the founders of Italian Renaissance art, and hence of the early modern tradition in Europe. In 1435-36, the multi-talented intellectual and art theorist Leon Battista Alberti dedicated his treatise *On Painting*, which was the first evaluation of the cultural potentials of contemporary Florentine art, to the architect Brunelleschi, and singled out the sculptors Ghiberti, Donatello, and Luca della Robbia, and the painter Masaccio as the figures he considered to be the pioneers of a revolutionary new style. That evaluation has never wavered, but in the last decade our understanding of these figures has been transformed by new books (one by a Rutgers alum), articles, and exhibitions; that on the Della Robbia at the NGA, Washington, we shall visit as a group.

There will be ten weeks of seminar discussions based on selected readings, in which I shall lead off with an overview of the artist's career and surrounding issues. Students will be assigned to present 10-15 minute summaries of the readings in those seminars. In the last weeks of the semester, students will give 25-minute oral presentations on research topics of their choice. These will then be written up as research papers to be turned in at semester's end.

### Preliminary Syllabus

Weeks 1 and 2 – Brunelleschi (more a consideration of his interaction with painters and sculptors, particularly in regard to the use of his invention, linear perspective, to create rational three-dimensional space, than of his architecture)

Readings: Trachtenberg, Marvin, *Building-in-Time*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 357-83

Garrard, Mary, *Brunelleschi's Egg: Nature, Art, and Gender in Renaissance Italy*, Berkeley: Univ. of California, 2010, 33-53

Field, Judith Veronica, "Perspective: Brunelleschi's Discovery and Masaccio's Practice" *Masaccio e Masolino, pittori e frescanti*, Milan: Skira, 2004, 69-76

Gentilini, Giancarlo, "Brunelleschi e Ghiberti, Donatello e Luca della Robbia, Masaccio: le arti a confronti," *Dall'umanesimo all'età barocca Lezioni di storia dell'arte*, vol. 2, 2002, 23-49

Weeks 3 and 4 – Ghiberti

Bloch, Amy, *Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise: humanism, history, and artistic philosophy in the Italian Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016 (RU alum)

Christiansen, Keith, "Ghiberti and Painting," *Art History*, 2013, 76-100

Bellosi, Luciano, "A More Modern Ghiberti: The *St. Matthew* for Orsanmichele," *Orsanmichele and the History and Preservation of the Civic Monument*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 2012, 213-42

#### Weeks 5 and 6 – Donatello

Rosenauer, Artur, "The Birthplace of Modern Sculpture at Orsanmichele," *Orsanmichele and the History and Preservation of the Civic Monument*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 2012, 168-78

Caglioti, Francesco, "I tre crocifissi grandi di Donatello," *Donatello svelato*, Venice, Marsilio, 2015, 39-63

Boffa, David, "Divine Illumination and the Portrayal of the Miraculous in Donatello's *St. Louis of Toulouse*," *Simiolus*, 31/4 (2005), 279-91 (RU alum)

Weller, Peter, "A Reassessment in Gender and Historiography: Donatello's Bronze *David* in the Twenty-First Century," *Artibus et Historiae*, 33, 2012, 43-77

Wilkins, David, "Donatello and his Patron," *Patronage and Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, ed. Kathleen Christian and David Drogin, Ashgate, 2010, 117-47

#### Weeks 7 and 8 – Masaccio

Eckstein, Nicholas, *Painted Glories: The Brancacci Chapel in Renaissance Florence*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 2014

Blum, Shirley Neilson, *The New Art of the Fifteenth Century: Faith and Art in Florence and the Netherlands*, NY, Abbeville, 2015, 65-95

Moffitt, John, *Painterly Perspective and Piety: Religious Uses of the Vanishing Point from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Jefferson, NC, 2008, 46-124

#### Weeks 9 and 10 – Luca della Robbia

Cambareri, Marietta, *Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*, Boston, MFA Publications, 2016

Sheldon, Julie, *The Della Robbia: From Renaissance to Regent Street*, Liverpool, Liverpool Univ. Press, 2016

Radke, Gary M. *Make a Joyful Noise: Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 2014

Visit to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, to see the Della Robbia exhibition

(more readings are likely to be added and adjusted according to the students' interests)