

Seminar Description

Art 630

SECULAR ART IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

This seminar will explore the development of secular art in the Italian Renaissance from the emergence of portraiture to the introduction of non-religious themes such as mythologies, Roman and vernacular legends and history, and chivalric themes that were chosen to decorate domestic residences. It will also consider the objects people commissioned to mark important life passages such as marriage, when the bedroom was typically redecorated with various sorts of painted furniture and wall painting, and childbirth. We will trace the emergence of new media and types like prints and statuettes that were particularly suited to the new subjects and their display in private residential settings. Long overlooked in the emphasis on religious and civic art, the field of secular art has recently opened up to serious investigation. This seminar will introduce students to the new thinking and the most recent literature in the field that has revised our understanding of the private lives of Renaissance Italians. The categories and interpretations of secular art introduced in the Renaissance influenced the course of decoration in the private sphere for centuries to come.

There will be one seminar at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Students will be graded on their contributions to discussions in the seminar, on their presentation of their research in an oral report to the group, and on their paper writing up this research (15-20 pages).