

Identity and Representation: Women and Men in Early Modern Portraiture

Date/Time	Tuesdays 23 rd October-20 th November 10.30am-12.30pm	Price	£90 (5 weeks)
Venue	Brockway Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (Weeks 1-4) Swedenborg Hall, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH (Week 5)	Lecturer	Carlo Corsato

Portraits represented the most lucrative market for early modern artists. From the fifteenth century onwards, growing personal wealth and the increasing expansion of European commerce multiplied the number of people with the means, and the interest in commissioning images that could represent the identity and legacy of the ruling classes. Wars, religious division, and famines may have set back the prosperity and undermined the peace of the old continent; yet culture flourished and the arts were required to picture (literally and metaphorically) new ideas and values, as well as the emerging role of the artist as an active part of society. The course explores the historical context and the artistic development of early modern portraiture, and addresses issues, such as art patronage and material culture, philosophy and literature, politics and religion. Case studies include works by the greatest artists of the period, including Leonardo, Raphael, Dürer, Holbein, Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck, and Velázquez.

1. Extraordinary Women: The Social Role of Beauty

Wives and mothers, intellectuals and muses, women played a crucial role in shaping early modern society and its values. Artists, such as Leonardo, Pontormo, Moroni, and Veronese portrayed the different roles of women and celebrated their beauty as a driving force for peace and prosperity.

2. Man's World: Images of Ambition, Vocation, and Duty

Whether they were bankers, condottieri, clerics, or literati, early modern men commissioned portraits from the greatest artists of the day (e.g. Raphael, Parmigianino, Titian, Veronese, Van Dyck): they attested to the aspirations and personality of the sitters, as well as preserving the memory of their identity and achievements for the future.

3. Faces of Power: Self-fashioning and State Portraits

The greatest masters, such as Bellini, Raphael, Holbein, Titian, Bronzino and Clouet, owed much of their fame and fortune to the privilege of portraying some of the most powerful rulers of the day. They set new standards for the representation of power and were able to embody the official identity of a nation in the public persona of the head of state.

4. Apelles Redivivus: Royalty and Majesty at Habsburg and Stuart Courts

Apelles, the greatest painter of ancient Greece, was widely renowned for his services to Alexander the Great and both the artist and the king were regarded as the highest union of art and regal virtues. Habsburg and Stuart kings revived the comparison and shaped a new image of royalty: Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck, and Velázquez were promoted to the role of the new Apelles of Europe.

5. Crypto Portraits: Artists, their Self, and their Patrons

Early modern artists were emancipated from the mere role of craftsmen and promoted themselves as playing an active part in the formation and evolution of society. Botticelli, Dürer, Licinio, Titian, Carracci, Rubens and Caravaggio portrayed artists in their new role as family men, pious devotees, and intellectuals capable of redefining art patronage in modern terms.

Lecturer

Carlo Corsato is a native Venetian who trained at the universities of Venice and Verona, and is a specialist in Renaissance art and architecture in Venice and the Veneto. He recently co-edited the first complete monograph on the church of Frari, which perfectly reflects his wide-ranging expertise and research interests, including devotional practice and liturgy, rituals and relics, art patronage and art-making through painting, sculpture and architecture. He has lectured at a number of institutions, including the University of St Andrews, Northeastern University in Boston, and Morley College in London, where he currently teaches courses in Renaissance and Baroque art. Carlo has also organised and led numerous art history visits throughout Italy and Europe.