



SYLLABUS

THE BIRTH OF ART HISTORY: ART CRITICISM IN ITALY FROM DANTE TO VASARI

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Contact Hrs: 45

SIENA, ITALY

As the modern idea of Art and Artist was born in Renaissance Italy, also Art History Criticism grew up in Tuscany, from Classical roots, mainly thanks to many artists, poets and men of letter. The main goal of this course is to demonstrate that this new idea of art criticism was introduced for the first time by Dante Alighieri in his *Divina Commedia* and then developed by many important authors during XIV century, like Petrarch and Boccaccio. Literature on art was fundamental during the golden age of Florentine Renaissance, and we cannot understand Botticelli masterworks without reading Marsilio Ficino treatises and Politian verses. Finally a Tuscan painter, architect and writer, Giorgio Vasari wrote the first modern book of art history: *The Lives of Artists from Cimabue to Michelangelo*; and a sculptor, Benvenuto Cellini published one of the best autobiographies.

After an introduction to the most important Classical art writers like Lucian, Pausanias, Pliny and Vitruvius, students will discuss passages from the best Mediaeval and Renaissance Italian sources about art and artists.

This course, on Italian literature and art history both, will explore the aesthetical ideas and the new cultural vision on art and society of the Renaissance, by exploring poetry, *novella*, handbooks for craftsmen, treatises on art, archive documents.

SYLLABUS:

- Week 1: 1) The Classical Literature on Art: Philosophy and Ekphrasis.
2) The Classical Literature on Art: Handbooks and Periegesis. **(Venturi, pp. 37-58)**
- Week 2: 3) XIV century: Dante and Petrarch. **(Handout)**
4) XIV century: Boccaccio. **(Handout, Venturi, pp. 70-72)**
- Week 3: 5) XIV century: Cennini and Villani. **(Handout, Venturi, pp. 72-78)**
6) XV century Florence: Ghiberti. **(Handout, Venturi, pp. 79-82)**
- Week 4: 7) XV century Florence: Alberti. **(Handout, Venturi, pp. 82-86, Blunt, chapt. 1)**
8) XV century Florence: Manetti. **(Handout)**
- Week 5: 9) XV century Florence: Historians of the “New Athen”. **Paper 1 (Handout)**
10) XV century Florence: Ficino, Politian and Botticelli. **(Handout)**

- Week 6: 11) Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 86-91, Blunt, chapt. 2**)
12) Michelangelo's biographies and poetry. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 91-99, Blunt, chapt. 5**)
- Week 7: 13) Vasari 1. (**Handout**)
14) Vasari 2. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 99-105, Blunt, chapt. 7**)
- Week 8: 15) The Accademia in Florence. (**Handout**)
16) On Architecture: Serlio and Palladio. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 105-106**)
- Week 9: 17) Autobiography: Cellini. Paper 2. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 37-58**)
18) The Council of Trento and Art. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 105-108, Blunt, chapt. 8**)
- Week 10: 19) The End of Renaissance: Lomazzo and Zuccari. (**Handout, Venturi, pp. 37-58, Blunt, chapt. 9**)
20) Final test.

TEXTBOOKS:

Handout (textes):

ANTHONY BLUNT, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600*, Oxford University Press;
LIONELLO VENTURI, *History of Art Criticism* (pp. 37-58, 70-108).

ADJUNCT BIBLIOGRAPHY:

STEFANO BALDASSARRI, *Image of Quattrocento Florence*, Yale University Press, 2000;
MICHAEL BAXANDALL, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford University Press;
FRANCIS AMES-LEWIS, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, Yale University Press;

EVALUATION/GRADING

The students will be asked to write two brief papers (500-1000 words each one) on a topic discussed during the course.

- Papers 30%
- Final test 30%
- Participation 40%.

Office Hrs: after class or by appointment

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The students are required to be punctual and not to bring food in the classroom